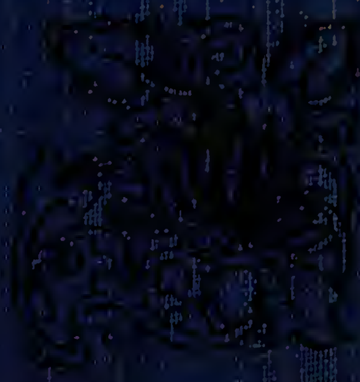
THE PLACE OF DREAMS



WILLIAM BARRY, D. D.

No. ....

Mary L. F. O'Hearn.

THE PLACE OF DREAMS:

FOUR STORIES,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM BARRY, D.D.

I have asked of the wise, "When ye dream,
Is the spirit awake or asleep?"
"At the place of dreams," they made answer,
"The spirit its watch doth keep."

"But the sun goes down, and the darkness
Blots out the last gleam of its light:"
They say to me, "Hast thou yet reckoned
The stars that are suns by night?"

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To Ella, Harry, and May

from W. B.

OUT from dusty streets, and houses
Wrapt in smoke that blinds the sun
Come into the woodlands, children,
Ere the day be wholly done.

Taste the quiet evening's savours,
Catch the light that golden falls,
Raindrops like, between the leafage
Shutting out the city walls.

We will talk of dreams and legends,
While o'er mossy paths we roam
That go wandering at their pleasure,
Yet at last will guide us home.

In these shadowy dells and thickets,
Long abandoned, lonesome, dim,
Echoes seem to linger round us
Notes from some forgotten hymn—

Which in cloisters angel-guarded,
Day and night to Heaven arose,
Like the sacred breath of incense,
Or a flame that steadfast glows.

Notes of prayer, and praise, and worship,
Frank and bold, or whispering sweet
Full of awestruck fear and reverence,
At the Great King's pierced Feet.

Reverence better is than knowledge
When our knowledge leads astray,
When the proud, self-vaunting science
Quenches light in its own ray.

List the heavenly sounds! They lure us
Onward still through alleys green,
Till above the forest branches
Flashing gold, the spire is seen.

On its cross a gleam yet sparkles;
Ruby-red the lamp within
Burns before the Presence; swiftly
Night comes on: we hasten in.

For the hour 'twixt light and darkness,
Twilight stories, such as these,
Half in sunshine, half in shadow,
Will they frighten? will they please?

Fancies slight and quickly fading!
Take them, children; in the flush
Sunset kindles, phantom vapours
E'en with rainbow hues may blush.

DORCHESTER, OXON.
October 6th, 1893.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THREE of the stories contained in this book had been published separately,—and "The Mystery of Drerewater" twice in different Magazines,—when I was asked to put them together. I did so, adding to them "St. Antony's Flask," which is an excessively free handling of certain episodes in Hoffmann's wild romance, known to Germans, if they read it still, under a much more formidable name. From an allusion thrown out at the beginning by the lad Julian, it has been taken as a story coeval with the Crusades. But it is much later. It belongs, as the careful reader will discern, to the eighteenth century;—in fact, to some period between 1760 and 1789, when Frederick II. was King of Prussia, and that Sicilian cheat and vagrant, Joseph Balsano, was masquerading over Europe as the Count di Cagliostro, gold-cook and magician. Except in one or two passages, describing the "Elixir des Teufels," I must not be thought of as translating Hoffmann; I have played a sort of *fantasia* on his text, and that is all.

When I sent my manuscript to the press, our printer, good, easy man, being wholly unacquainted with Sanscrit, and never having so much as glanced at the "Upanishads" (for

which small blame can attach to him), transformed the title I had given to one which he deemed more likely, and wrote in gilt letters on the back of the little volume, "The Palace of Dreams." It was pretty; but I meant something else. Had he consulted me I should have quoted for his better information a few lines which I am now going to set down from an English version, published at Bombay in 1891, of the "Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad," page 305, and the following.

You are doubtless aware, learned reader,—for now I address you, and not the printer,—that Hindu philosophy has many things to say touching the soul, or spirit, or essence, which descends into the body and there abides, though utterly distinct from it. That soul bears a vast number of names, one of which is Purusha. And of Purusha we are told in the work, to which I make reference, that "when sun and moon have set, when fire is quenched, and language falls silent, he becomes his own light." For there are two worlds, or "places," in one of which he dwells,—and that is the body; but towards another he travels,—and that is beyond the body. "But the place of dreams which lies between these is the third." "Not," says a commentator, "that dreams themselves are a world, any more than the space between two villages is itself a village;" but in them we reach the boundary, the trysting-place, of sense and spirit.

All dreams, in short, are not simply a faint perception of things seen before, in waking hours; that we must call reminiscence. But "in dream, himself dreamless, he, the Purusha, developes the modes of dreaming." And thus it is with him: "No chariots are there, no horses nor roads; then he creates chariots, horses, and roads. No pleasures are there, no joys nor rejoicings; then he creates pleasures, joys, and rejoicings. No tanks are there, no lakes, nor rivers; then he creates tanks, lakes, and rivers; for he it is that does all."

Again, the Indian Sage tells us of Purusha, "In his dream, passing from high to low, he puts on manifold forms, sometimes making love, at other times laughing, then beholding fearful sights. . . . As a great fish glides between both banks, the right and the left, so glides he between these two boundaries, which are the limit of dream and waking. As an eagle or falcon, sailing through the air, folds his wings, fatigued, and is drawn to his nest, so does Purusha travel to that bourne, where, slumbering, he desires not with desire, neither sees he any more in dreams." When he beholds reality, for him it is deliverance.

This middle sphere is, then, something far more mysterious than such a system as, for example, Mr. Herbert Spencer's would acknowledge. It is not altogether echo and memory; rather is it a symbolic warning held out to us

by realities, themselves hidden, though never abolished, while the sun is shining, and our senses are awake and about their business. In it, and by means of it, the soul reaches out to dim forebodings, glimpses, presentiments, of a state to which only the religious, or the artistic, or the metaphysical mood will furnish an entrance; and the "Upanishads" would boldly pronounce that "in dream the spirit quits the world," or, at least, may do so under favouring circumstances. Genius, following the form of its ideal visions, comes at length into the neighbourhood, and, perchance, is aware of the presence of that which is no dream, but "a self-shining light." Supreme art is revelation.

Doubtless, instead of borrowing from Sanscrit wisdom,—always to be dealt in cautiously, as plunging into deeps where it is not well to go down,—I might have chosen some of the splendid lines of Wordsworth for a motto, and suffered our own poet to instruct us how the soul, "moving about in worlds not realised," gains a dark but saving suspicion, a forecast, as it were, of the truth, in which body, sense, and all things visible come to be known as veils and allegories, beneath which our immortal substance abides,—upon which also it plays, making of them instruments whereby to fashion itself anew and soar upward into the light. You, my dear reader, will take whichever suits you, the "Upanishads," or the "Ode on the Intimations

of Immortality." In any case, you will not charge upon me the eccentricities of our mild Brahmans, from whom I steal a title which, in its way, is poetical, no less than significant. But when I endeavour to put you on your guard against meddling with the thing called "Spiritualism," I am serious, and I hope you will let me preach to listening ears. In the "place of dreams,"—a debatable land of mist and sunshine, where some other world than ours looms up fitfully with attractions of its own,—there is room for deceit, for juggling, for evil influences. Learn so much of St. Theresa, who had often explored its boundaries. To what a height the evil may rise, and what stern self-control is asked of imaginative temperaments, though under vow nor in purpose altogether selfish, I have attempted to sketch in the trial, lapse, and repentance of the unhappy Julian. The depth of my colouring must be measured by the greatness of the danger; and therein, I believe, will be found its justification.

WILLIAM BARRY.

Dorchester, Oxford,
April, 1901.

THE HOUSE OF SHADOWS.

I.

MY VISITOR.

THE story, which I am going to tell exactly as it happened, is this:

I, Henry Malden, now an old priest, and much given always to reading and solitude, was sent down into an out-of-the-way part of England, to take charge of a country mission. The neighbourhood was very lonesome. A few hamlets scattered about, none of them close together; farm-houses nestling in the hollows where tall trees grew thickly; rivulets piercing their way through underwoods; and wide tracts of heathery common. I had only a handful of people; and I knew nothing of those who did not attend my little church on the hill-side. Where I dwelt bore the name of Monks' End. But what monks had lived there, or how they disappeared, or when, I could never learn.

You must think of me as a dull, prosy person, satisfied with routine and my own company, passing my days in a kind of innocent dream;

like one who sees the world's brilliant motley painted in dim and faded colours, on a canvas brown with age—a far-off confusion, the sound of which cannot come to him. One week resembled another. Seldom did anything in the shape of man knock at my door. Having no trouble of my own, I fell, perhaps, into a careless oblivion of the stage I had long ago quitted; and the griefs of human kind became less real to me than was wholesome or just. If on that score I was ever to blame, my penance was awaiting me. But how could I have foreseen the manner after which it would be inflicted?

Be that as it may, on a fine winter's morning, when the clear sunshine lay across the snow, and was beginning to thaw the icicles that hung in glittering strings from the trees upon my lawn, I heard a carriage driving up to the gate; and laying down the book I was reading—for I spent most of my time in my little study—I waited for the unexpected visitor. My servant brought me a card, and said that the gentleman wished to see me. I glanced at his name. It was quite unknown to me—I had never met Mr. Richard Affane, or any one with whom I could connect him in my memory. "Show him in," I said, giving the fire a poke to make it burn up brighter, and then turning round on the hearth-

rug to see the face of the man as he entered. Certainly he was a grand figure; tall and soldierly in his bearing, with keen gray eyes, bronzed features, and a grizzled moustache and whiskers. I judged that he must be over sixty. He wore a shooting-jacket and gaiters, and carried a stick in his hand. Bowing courteously, he took the seat I offered him, and began, in deep but agreeable tones, to explain what had brought him.

"You have never heard of me, Father Malden," he said, "but as I once lived in this part of the country, and am coming back here to spend my old days, I felt it a duty to call upon you. I was not always a Catholic—" he paused, and seemed to be lost in thought for a moment. "However," he went on, "I am one now, thank God; and you are my pastor."

I made some civil reply. "Shall you be living near Monks' End?" I asked.

"No," he said, "at Araglin. Do you know the house? It is nearly seven miles from here."

"I have driven by it. A large and rather secluded place, isn't it, hidden among trees?"

"Secluded enough," he answered, with a short and, I had almost said, a violent laugh, which gave his features an odd expression.

"But I am an old soldier, tired of knocking about the world. I shall not be sorry to sit still and smoke the pipe of peace. My tastes are those of a bachelor. You will not be troubled to keep the consciences of any womankind at Araglin, father," he concluded with a smile.

"That will be doubling the charm of your acquaintance," I answered, in the same light tone. "But have you always held these severe opinions?"

"Not quite," he said hastily; "I lost my wife many years ago." He walked to the window and looked out. "What a fine lawn!" he remarked; "your church makes an impressive background. It was not built when I lived in these parts. One ought to be happy in so quiet a nook."

"I never found the place make much difference," said I, joining him. "The world every one lives in is made of his thoughts and memories rather than his surroundings. Don't you agree?"

"I hardly know," replied Mr. Affane absently. "By the way, Father Malden," he went on, taking up a volume from the table at which we were standing, "are you fond of science? I see this is a treatise of biology, and a pretty stiff one, too. I knew Professor Ranklin, who wrote

it—a clear head, but too prosaic for his business."

"Yes, I like science well enough," said I in answer to his question, while turning over in my mind his last remark, which struck me as uncommon—"and I read what I can get in the way of books. But I am only a looker-on; I don't pretend to know anything."

"Ah! who does? At least, if you consider what there is to be known. But now, will you come and see me?" said Mr. Affane, as he turned to go. "I can send for you if you don't care about walking, or wish to spare your nag."

Naturally I accepted his invitation. In my place I had no alternative. But I liked his frank, hearty ways. And there was a charm in his smile, although the remembrance of that short explosion of laughter grated on one. But then few men laugh agreeably. It is somewhat of a barbarous accomplishment, at the best.

II.

AN UNCANNY HOST.

I was to dine and sleep at Araglin, and Mr. Affane's carriage took me there on a terribly cold night, when the roads were like glass, and everything one touched "burnt frore," as the poet speaks. Much would I have preferred to stay in my own den. The winter was lasting long that year. Great storms of rain had swollen the rivers, flooding field and meadow; then the frost had fallen like sudden enchantment, fixing the water in icy sheets, upon which came tumbling and whirling snow-drifts from a gray and steadfast heaven. The villages were more lonely than ever. Hardly any one came to church. I had seen Mr. Affane two or three times on Sunday, but only for a moment after Mass. We had held no further conversation; and he did not write until his man brought me a note, in brief though very civil terms, asking me to stay the night in his new abode. Now, though living on the outskirts of a country village, I had always contrived to keep its gossip at a distance. No talk, therefore, concerning my latest parishioner came to my ears. All I knew of him was what he had told me.

When I reached Araglin it was dark, but I could see lights peering through the trees; and as the carriage drew up to the house, I was surprised to observe that in every room there seemed to be an illumination. Mr. Affane evidently shared my own taste for a cheerful place about him. As he came out on the steps to receive me, which he did with great cordiality, I remarked to him on the pleasantness of seeing such a warm glow in the midst of the white and icy landscape.

"I can't bear the dark," he said, leading the way in. "These lights burn from sundown to sunrise. They make up to me, as well as they can, for the sky of India, which I never thought I should miss with such intense longing. I doubt, however, that I shall get much comfort from them."

It was an opening for conversation, and while we were dining I asked him about his travels. He seemed by no means reticent. His stories were some of them curious; I thought them bordering on the incredible. But he told them all with the same air of frank simplicity. Perhaps he was only amusing himself, or trying how far he could go with me. That he certainly did not learn; for, while he went on talking, I could not help looking around, and was astonish-

ed at the magnificence with which he had fitted up the room in which we were sitting, as well as his study, or smoke-room, of which we had a glimpse behind half-drawn curtains. The walls were coloured in subdued tints, with here and there an immense piece of tapestry from Persian looms hanging upon them, showing quaint arabesques of which the designs recalled as in a dream fantastic birds and beasts among foliage. The furniture, of which there was little, corresponded with the decoration of the walls, and was likewise Oriental. On every side lights shone with a soft and steady glow. The meal itself which we were discussing was delicate and choice, with strange aromatic wines on the table to accompany it. I felt that I had somehow escaped from the atmosphere of the Western life. My senses yielded to the delightful charm, which was so quiet and unobtrusive, yet so powerful. But something within me revolted. I said to myself that a brave and manly temper would melt under these luxurious influences to I knew not what—to effeminacy, cowardice, mere love of the pleasant.

"I see how your thoughts run," said Mr. Affane with a slight smile, when we were sitting, after dinner, in the study beyond the curtains—he smoking a rare tobacco of which I enjoyed

the fragrance more than I should have liked the taste, and I drinking coffee out of gorgeous Japanese ware in red and gold, the name of which I do not recollect. "You are marvelling that a man who lives by himself, and a soldier, should care about these things"—and he pointed negligently to the woven pictures on the walls—"but I could not be at the trouble of changing my habits merely because I happened to be settling down in England. I have lived in this way for many years; it is only putting the East for the West. And then," he continued somewhat eagerly, "I am not sure that I agree with the idea you threw out when I first had the pleasure of calling on you, of one's surroundings being indifferent. Don't you believe in the influence of matter on spirit?"

"Put it the other way," I said, "of spirit on matter, you mean."

"Ah, well," he replied, "again I say, who knows? They act and react. Anyhow, you believe in their communicating impressions to each other. Of course you do," he concluded impatiently, throwing the end of his cigarette in the fire.

"Tell me how it strikes you," was my rejoinder. It is a priest's duty to have his eyes about him; and I felt convinced that Mr.

Richard Affane was not talking at random. He had something on his mind, light or heavy, but *something*. The question was, Would he reveal it?

After a few moments' silence, my host, who had lit another cigarette and was sitting with his head thrown back in his chair, and his eyes shut, like a man in profound meditation, took up the thread of our talk again.

"You know," he remarked, biting his lower lip in a way that seemed habitual to him, "if I were discussing with a mere man of science, like my friend Professor Ranklin, or with a layman, I should not care to make a fool of myself by putting forward extravagant theories. But with you it is different."

"You think I don't mind extravagances," I broke in, laughing. He put out his hand deprecatingly.

"No, no; that is not what I mean. But, as a priest, you allow of great and unknown powers—not only the phenomena we call magnetism, electricity, and so on, but faculties of an order quite beyond these—an unseen life, as well as an invisible dynamic force."

"Well," I said, "draw your conclusion. Suppose I do admit that there is a world of living agencies more than human; what then?"

"This," he returned, leaning forward eagerly and laying his hand on my chair; "since matter, as we call it, can affect mind, why should not spirit affect spirit? What is to hinder that which is in the flesh from communicating with that which has gone out of it—which is behind the veil?" His voice had sunk, and the eyes of the man kindled.

I have an extreme dislike, amounting to horror, of the abnormal and the eccentric, so I answered, half-angrily, "What is to hinder? Why the Veil itself, I think. Does it exist for no purpose?"

He drew back a little, as if rebuked; and said in a tone of disappointment, "But some have looked through it, have pierced beyond it, and yet have lived."

"Not by the methods of science or of faith," was my reply. "As a Christian I must believe in the supernatural, and I do. Yet the same law teaches me not to hanker after the abnormal. Let the dead bury their dead."

"Ah, yes," he answered, "if there *were* any dead."

It was an uncomfortable answer, and to me a dreary subject. I rose, pleading fatigue, and was wishing Mr. Affane good-night, when he said, retaining my hand: "All I meant—but

I am little used to explaining my thoughts to another—was, that behind the forces of the physical order, high or low, there must be spirit-forces and spirit-life. Everything goes to prove that in the two worlds, of the seen and the unseen, a perfect harmony or parallelism has always existed and exists now. The past is in the present, and the present was in the past. Where scientific men get off the track is in supposing that anything but life can discover life. Their instruments are blind and dumb until the spirit gazes through them, and interprets the message they bring. You grant so much?" he insisted. "How, being a Catholic and a priest, could you deny it, indeed?"

"But, my dear Mr. Affane," said I, with a little impatience, "you are only repeating in other words what I granted not long ago: that spirit acts on matter, and not *vice versa*. You seem to infer the lawfulness of attempting to establish an intercourse with those who have passed away. I am convinced that we shall do so at our peril. The Almighty has made death the boundary and shore of time, even as the waves fall back from the beach, and come no farther than they are suffered. Why should we break the Divine command? It is good for us that the other world is hidden. We could not

see it face to face and fulfil our daily tasks; we should be intoxicated with eternity—"

"Then you think the illusion of a solid world of matter, dead and impenetrable, ought to be kept up?" he said at length, turning away rather sadly.

"I did not say so. What I hold is that the lust of knowledge, like every other lust, ought to be kept under control; that there is a curiosity which leads to ruin, which disorders the brain, which unsteadies the nerves, and which hardens the heart. Believe me, our fragile being holds together simply on condition of temperance and the modest use of whatsoever faculties we possess. To run after strange and wandering lights is to court destruction."

With these words, I went up to my room. Late as it was, I could not sleep soundly, but fell into a half-doze from which I was continually awaking. The great house, in which as I knew lights were burning through the night, became intensely still. But from time to time I heard, as it seemed to me, a footfall in the chamber underneath my own, where Mr. Affane slept. Was he pacing to and fro, holding talk with his uncanny mind, or seeking, perhaps, that chink in the dark veil through which he might peer into the worlds beyond? I had a keen sense of his

danger, and was tempted to go down to him again. But interference might do more harm than good. When next the thought came into my head, I was wide awake in the broad daylight, and a servant was tapping at my door.

III.

AT THE END OF THE GARDEN.

I had engaged to stay at Araglin until the afternoon; and as the morning air was crisp and the snow hard, crackling under one's feet as one walked, Mr. Affane proposed that we should go round his shrubbery and plantations. They were very extensive. I found much to admire, especially a winding walk under Scotch firs, that took us a great distance from the mansion, and opened upon bosky dells and nooks, now full of brown leaves which the snow had not quite covered up. My host did not continue last night's conversation; and we were turning at the extremity of a path when my attention was drawn to an upright slab among the grass, in a

sequestered and even gloomy spot, overshadowed with the growth of yew and ivy. On looking again, I saw that there were several other slabs, and the shape of the enclosure, which had a quickset hedge on three sides, revealed to me that I was standing in a kind of cemetery. Mr. Affane said nothing; but when I moved forward, he remained in the path, and left me to read the epitaphs, which were scarcely decipherable on the moss-grown tombstones. I could, indeed, make out only a word here and there. The slab, however, which had first caught my eye, seemed to have been recently cleansed of its dark growth, and I read the inscription. It consisted of a single name at the top; while, some way beneath, there was a second. The first was "Eva." Nothing more, neither a date nor a family name appeared on the stone. With some difficulty I made out the other. It was an odd name which I had never seen elsewhere, "Enzian."

"How extraordinary!" I said to Mr. Affane as I rejoined him. "Who could have made a graveyard in such a place? Can you tell me how it comes to be here, in the grounds of a country-house?"

"Yes," he answered, "of course I can. Did I never mention that Araglin has belonged to my family for many hundreds of years? There was

formerly a chapel on the spot where we now stand; the graveyard was close to it; and my people have been buried here for generations."

"I ought to have known," I said in some confusion; "any one else would have read his county-history; but antiquities are not my line. May I ask whose tomb is that with the two names upon it?"

A strong spasm shot across his face. "My dear Father Malden," he said with an effort, "I brought you this way that you might be told, for I want your help. But"—he hesitated, and I thought would have fallen, he had become suddenly so weak—"I cannot, I cannot, tell you here what, some time or other, you must know. That tomb holds the remains of my wife and my only child. It is all I have left of them in the world. Long ago I turned my face from it; but the strong attraction, which was always pulling at my heart, has led me home again, over seas and deserts, from the wildest regions of Hindostan, from adventures and chances in which death was on every side of me, and I could not die. Think what it is to have your heart in the grave—to be lying between your dead wife and child, even while you are hurried into the thick of intrigue and battle. Can you imagine it? I was absolute ruler in a native

Indian state—more than king, for I could act as I pleased and was answerable only to my own right hand. But all that was a waking dream. My life, my life," he repeated energetically, "was still here, haunting this spot. I came back, at last. And the slab you were reading divides me from those who were my very self, my other soul. What can I do for them, father?" he asked with a wild and haggard expression.

"You can pray for them," I said, leading him away by the arm. "Do you not believe in the Communion of Saints?"

"Believe?" he answered, calming down, though still inwardly agitated—"believe? It was the preaching of that doctrine which made me a Catholic."

I thought I understood our last night's talk now. But to inquire into the story of his irretrievable loss was more than I dared. Nor did he invite my confidence further. We returned in silence to the house; and the same afternoon I was driven back, over the frosty roads, to Monks' End.

IV.

THE EXPERIMENT.

Nearly six months went by, and my fitful and unsatisfactory intercourse with Mr. Affane had not advanced our friendship. When I called at Araglin he seemed glad of my company. I dined there once in a way; and we exchanged views on many subjects. But the steadfast abhorrence with which I regarded the more shadowy and doubtful aspects, whether of science or of life, on which he loved to dwell, was too manifest; and though he would sometimes approach the question of intercourse with the unseen, I gave him no encouragement to pursue it. Perhaps I was over-timid; yet my conscience assures me that I acted for the best.

When the long days came, I had my own occupations. I was particularly absorbed in a line of historical reading which demanded close attention; so that, little as I heard about the master of Araglin, I did not think it necessary to pay him a visit for some time. He had always been uncertain in his attendance at Monks' End Church, partly because of his health, which was precarious, and also, as I gathered, on account of his frequent absences in

London. We had never arrived at the stage of close correspondence; and on the whole, I dare-say we found our English reserve an advantage on both sides. Could I have done him any service? Was not the course of events traced out from the beginning, and, when he first came to see me, inevitable? Others may pass judgment; it is my business merely to narrate.

On a cloudy and sweltering afternoon in July, when I was engaged among the flower-beds in my garden, making haste to have done because of the thunder in the air, I saw Mr. Affane's groom driving furiously down the road and scattering the groups of children by which his horse flew. He caught sight of me over the wall, and without dismounting, begged me, with a trembling voice, to come at once to Araglin; there was no time to be lost. I did not trouble him with questions, for he looked somewhat scared, except to ask whether his master was ill—to which he answered vacantly, "Ill or out of his mind, I don't know which, sir." I went into the church; made all preparations as usual when attending a sick-call; and was soon by the driver's side on my way to the strange house in which I had never felt comfortable.

His intelligence was sad and perplexing. Mr. Affane, after an absence of about five weeks,

had returned on Saturday—it was now Wednesday afternoon—and shut himself up in the large book-room which served him as a sort of laboratory. For he was constantly engaged, so his man said, in making scientific experiments—perhaps in relation to magnetism, but this Lamborne could not, of course, know. On Sunday evening, as he did not appear all day, his own man knocked at the door, and inquired whether he might bring him something to eat, for it had been his custom to take his meals in this way, when the mood was on him. Mr. Affane replied in his ordinary voice, from within, that he wanted nothing and was not to be disturbed. But that night the servants (all of whom he had brought from the East and who were greatly attached to him) heard a loud sobbing in the room, the sound of several voices, as they thought, and at times a wild and disordered rush of feet across it,—and here was the most extraordinary and incredible point—which seemed to pass over the threshold, ascend the stairs to an upper chamber, and there die away. Since then the sounds had been repeated incessantly, and were still going on.

When I looked at Lamborne in surprise, and told him he must have been dreaming, the man assured me that every one in the house—the five

servants who made up Mr. Affane's indoor establishment—had heard the sound of unknown voices, the rushing of feet, and the disorder on the staircase. Not one of them had dared to go into the upper corridor since; they had slept where they could in the kitchen and the servants' hall. Their master was still invisible, though certainly alive, as they could tell by his moving about. He had eaten nothing, to their knowledge, since his return, and they were full of dread lest the next step in this awful business should be suicide. More than this they neither knew nor could guess.

I do not pretend to be of a venturesome temper. I have the courage of my calling, a sense that duty is duty and must be done, but no delight in facing unknown perils. Had I not felt that I owed my services to this apparently brain-stricken man, I might have turned back on hearing the account, so much beyond the bounds of credibility, which Lamborne had given of the state of things at Araglin. Happily I could not palter with my obligation. We arrived towards eight o'clock. The hall-door was immediately opened, and I entered the house. No sooner had I done so, than I became aware of the sound of feet and voices in the library upstairs, where, as Lamborne said, his

master had shut himself in. It was a dreadful moment. My heart stopped beating. I thought I should have fainted. But I was resolved to go on. "Will any of you come with me?" I asked the servants, who were huddled at the foot of the staircase, listening, with blanched faces, their eyes strangely watchful and large, to the clamour above. They shrank back when I addressed them, but none made answer. "Come," I said, "what is there, in the name of God, to be afraid of?" It was all in vain. I nerved myself, accordingly, to go upstairs alone, having That with me, as I felt, which would be my protection whatever might come to pass. The preternatural din never ceased. There seemed to be a growing tumult inside as I approached the locked and formidable door. Scarcely, however, were my fingers on the handle, when I thought that the door itself was flung violently open, and something rushed by me which I could not see. It fell with a heavy weight and a groan against the staircase leading to the next corridor, and then went moaning and stumbling the whole way up, until it reached some room over my head.

I was almost sick with terror. But, to my amazement, when I looked, I saw that the door which I had thought open remained shut as

before. In spite of my overwhelming sensation to the contrary, *it had never been open.* I could perceive nothing whatever of the interior of the room, where lugubrious silence followed upon the clash and confusion of which I had so lately been sensible.

"Mr. Affane," I tried to call out in as loud a voice as I could summon—but it was only a stifled whisper—"will you let me in? Let me in, for God's sake."

"Who is there?" asked a voice which I did not at once recognize. "Go away until I send for you."

"Mr. Affane, I am the priest—Father Malden," I insisted. "May I not speak to you for an instant?"

There was no answer, but the door suddenly opened; and now I could see into the room. Its great windows, looking westward, seemed to be hung with flaming clouds, which at first dazzled me. On one side, in a deep arm-chair, was sitting, with his head bent down, the man of whom I was in quest, his eyes staring at me, his hair dishevelled, and—good Heavens, it had become as white as snow! He wore a kind of loose dressing-gown, crimson with slashes of purple across it, unfastened at the neck. In Mr. Affane's appearance there was the wildest

disorder. My eyes searched the room fearfully; but I could discern no vestige of the tumult I had heard coming up the stairs. Books and instruments were in their places; all had an air of undisturbed repose. It was wonderful after the hurly-burly that had reigned there but a few minutes before. Mr. Affane, whether exhausted or unobservant, did not speak, and I went up to take his hand. As I did so, the door closed of itself.

V.

A LIFE'S TRAGEDY.

It was the most eerie circumstance that had ever befallen me. I did not know in what words to begin, or what to do. My cowardly instinct warned me to return and open the door; yet I felt convinced that if I did, my only chance of helping Richard Affane would have vanished. I held his hand; it was cold and clammy. But speak I could not; only, in my distress, I murmured some half-inarticulate prayer. My eyes, which were fastened on his, appeared at length to draw him back, as it were, out of the un-

fathomable depths into which he had sunk. He returned my pressure, sat up, and looked at me earnestly.

"You should have come before," he said in a low voice.

"Why did you not send for me?" I replied. He shook his head. "There was no sending in my case," he answered, almost under his breath, and the words made my hair stand up: "*they* would not let me." He looked round, as if in expectation of something following on what he had spoken; but all was still.

"You heard it?" he inquired passionately, but in a low and fearful voice; "it is no hallucination of mine; you heard it outside, I know. Has not the whole house heard it day and night since it began? Tell the truth, father."

What could I say? The look on my face was enough. "Yes, it is outside of me, not in my brain," he cried, "there have been delusions which were nothing else than the coinage of frenzy; but this, this is a reality!"

I whispered to him, not knowing when the next horror might break out of the silence, "Can you say how it arose? Who caused it?"

"I caused it!" he exclaimed fiercely; and his loud tones made me shudder. Would not the unseen Thing he was defying answer him with

some fresh portent? But no, he was suffered to go on. My thought, all the while he spoke, was like a sickening sensation as of a third person, or object (by what name shall I describe it?) hovering near—a presence, at once loathsome and irresistible, in the room around us.

"Come," he said, grasping my hand, "I will tell you all. But it is not a confession. Long ago, when I came into the Church, I confessed. Let me speak as to a friend—a human creature in the flesh, similar to myself.

"It is the story of my wife I wish to tell you. Her grave you have seen, but neither you nor any one else knows how she came to die at twenty-three. Father," he exclaimed with terrible earnestness, "I killed her!"

"God forbid!" I answered with a cry, drawing back from the man; "you cannot mean what you are saying."

"I killed her," reiterated Mr. Affane, looking straight at me, "not with these hands, but as surely as if I had stabbed her to the heart. Do not think I am raving. She was a proud, sensitive woman, was Eva Norland. I married her against her father's inclination, for he said, with good reason, that the Affanes had always been fierce and unmanageable, and I had inherited the worst of their temper. Yes, I had, and I

knew it. Still, we loved one another; all the more, perhaps, that I was not easy to control. We spent three years of happy wedded life, my irritable temper getting the upper hand of me at times, but Eva patient and forgiving. Our child was born—as beautiful as an angel, whom his old Tyrolese nurse called Enzian because of his great blue eyes, like the Alpine gentian. You saw the name on his tomb. Then we made the acquaintance of Gerald Mengs, an artist, half Italian, half German. And that broke the spell of our happiness."

Though Affane was a strong man, I heard the sound of tears in his voice while he was speaking. I listened distractedly. My dread was lest the noise in the air should begin again. I begged him to finish quickly, for the suspense was overpowering.

"Mengs had all sorts of accomplishments," he went on. "In those days I could only hunt and shoot. He was a musician. Eva liked him; and so did I at the beginning. Then he came down and stayed here. They were always together; but why wasn't I with them? Oh, I was busy about the farm and a thousand other things. Jealous? I *was* wild with jealousy at times, though I said to myself it was all nonsense and I was a fool. Eva noticed the change in me.

Naturally, she was disdainful, and, instead of telling Mengs to go, she insisted on his staying for some concert or other. He was to play there, and they must practise together morning after morning. You can see the thing. I knew she was only provoking me; but I could not stand it. Why didn't she let him go?

"It was a hard frost and the hunting had been given up. That morning I had nothing to do but lounge in and out of the house. I heard their infernal music going on, in this very room. The piano was here, in front of us. How long I had been wandering about, with certain thoughts getting warm in my heart, is more than I can tell. But at last, as I was coming upstairs by that door—it was wide open—I saw, as it seemed to me, Gerald Mengs turning towards Eva with an expression in his eyes which I didn't like. They were just finishing a duet they had been singing. The rest I can't describe; it was all one flash. I know that when I looked up again, sensible, Mengs was on the ground, and my fingers were round his throat. It was brutal, ungentlemanly, you say. So it was. But the brute had sprung out of his lair; there was no gentleman just then in Richard Affane. I should have choked the life out of Mengs, but, as I looked up, there was my lovely boy Enzian,

whom I had not noticed before, standing on the threshold, his eyes dilated with horror and his lips a dead white. He was fascinated by the face on the ground. Well he might be. Mengs had the awful look of a soul in mortal agony. I was flinging him away when Eva, recovering as from a trance, snatched up the boy in her arms, and ran out shrieking. The next I heard was a heavy fall, a child's voice in terrible pain, and the sound of flying footsteps on the stairs."

"Yes," I cried at that instant, I, Philip Malden, cried out almost beside myself, "and you hear them now, don't you—now, Mr. Affane? Good God, they *are* on the stairs! What shall I do?"

It was no delusion. The whole drama which my companion had been rehearsing, suddenly enacted itself in the room and outside—a hurrying tumult, a panic of the invisible, addressed not to the sight but to the hearing, and all the more stupendous that it was not seen. I put my hands to my ears. It made no difference; the sounds increased, and were prolonged, and died away in the region overhead, only to re-commence on the threshold of the library. I was quivering with fear, to which any other feeling, how dreadful soever, would have seemed light and tolerable. The deeps of existence had

yawned; the veil was rent between the living and the dead.

"That is what I have been listening to since Sunday," observed Affane; "the imagination of it, which I had driven down beneath the surface in my Eastern adventures, has taken its revenge. But it is my own fault. You warned me not to meddle with the supernatural."

"And have you?" I asked timidly, when the quiet was restored. He nodded significantly.

"My wife," he resumed after a pause, when all was silent; "fell with the boy against the stairs, and his head struck on the balustrade. He was hurt beyond all cure, being a delicate child, and already weakened by his fit of terror. He died in her arms within the week. She followed him soon. It was impossible that she should live with a broken heart. She never forgave me. I was not even suffered to enter the room where she died."

"What became of Mengs?"

"Oh! we met," replied Affane coldly; "he behaved like a gentleman, and gave me satisfaction. He had himself to thank. That every one allowed. I have never felt troubled on the score of his death. But he swore to me with his dying lips that I misjudged Eva. I know I did, and that I was a passionate young fool.

"Then I shut up the house, went to India, lived among the natives, and learned from them practices in which you don't believe. I pass over all that. Something withheld me from mixing up the names of my dead wife and child in these devilries. You are quite right; they come from that quarter and nowhere else. I was made a Catholic, as I told you, by seeing how your people pray for their dead; and I tried to pray for mine. But just consider the difference. I couldn't; it brought up the whole scene, and I was not forgiven. I said to myself last year, 'Why not go and live at Araglin? You'll be near them, and it is your home as well as theirs.' I came back; and the longing to see the face of my dead wife grew upon me like a passion. I turned for amusement to scientific problems; but they threw me on the old question of calling up—you know what—" looking around as he spoke. "I didn't see why it should be forbidden. Still I resisted, went up to town, found I had no acquaintance there worth cultivating, was wretchedly miserable, and, last Saturday, rushed down here again, determined to put in practice what my Easterns had shown me—oh, I knew it would work; I had seen the thing. But I couldn't say beforehand how. When it began, I thought I was crazed. But *you* heard it;

every one heard it; there's no mistake about the matter now."

"There is crime and sin, however," I began to say when he paused.

VI.

DE PROFUNDIS CLAMAVI.

But we were struck dumb, both of us, by what happened next. I cannot expect to be believed; yet, with my own eyes, I saw, from out of the mid-vacancy of the room, emerge, as in a glass, three several figures—a young man, in the velvet jacket which artists wear, lying on the ground, his face inexpressibly distorted, and above him the very features of Richard Affane, bloodshot with rage and murder; while at a little distance stood, as though carved in stone, the most beautiful dark-eyed woman, with uplifted hands, and gasping, half-opened mouth. Nothing I ever witnessed could be more distinct or vivid. And the figures did not float away, did not pass.

The fiery sunset, which now flooded the library, made a glowing atmosphere about them; yet they neither melted into it like shadows nor lost one touch of their solidity. Appalling was the likeness, the contrast, between the living man, with snow-white hair and ashen looks, at my side, and his wraith, or spectre, so full of vindictive passion, blazing in the heyday of violent youth, and strangling his enemy on the floor. How long the vision lasted I know not. Affane saw it as well as I. For when his ghastly double turned, as though to glance towards Eva (it was surely the accused wife!), Richard sprang up wildly and ran to clasp her in his arms. I beheld his vain attempt to embrace the shadow. It slipped from him, and the whole scene disappeared. Then Affane collapsed in a heap, as though smitten with apoplexy, and a white foam gathered on his lips.

Let me not dwell on the misery of that night. At first I could get no one to help me. By and by Lamborne crept into the room, and we made up a bed for his master where he had fallen. To remove him was out of our power; his pleading eyes forbade the attempt.

Hour after hour I sat by him reciting the prayers in my Breviary, and watching when reason might return. I asked humbly for light

and guidance from above; and in the depth of the midnight-stillness it was given to me. I took my resolution. When morning broke I sent Lamborne with a hasty but explicit letter to the friend at Monks' End who had the care of my altar and vestments. He came speedily, bringing, as I had directed, all things requisite for saying Mass. An altar was fitted up in the library; I proceeded to vest, and John Whitlock served me. The patient, who had been sunk in lethargy, roused himself when I began, and followed me wonderingly with his eyes, not being altogether conscious of what was going forward. I offered the Holy Sacrifice that he might be set free from malign influences and unhallowed thoughts; that time might be allowed him for repentance; and, if God pleased, that he might recover. The sounds and sights of yesterday had now wholly ceased. I fancied there was an unwonted freshness in the air. That immense weight which had oppressed me like a nightmare was gone.

When the last Gospel was over, and I was kneeling in thanksgiving on the altar-step, Richard Affane called to me.

"You have done well," he said in a calm voice; "I feel better now."

"Yes," I told him, "you look tired, but the

evil thing has been taken from your heart. Will you not make your confession?"

He did so with the unaffected sorrow of a child. What passed between us, of course, is sacred. Nor shall I venture to hint, although I had his leave in case it seemed expedient, at the means which had been taken to evoke from its tomb the awful past. Whether the dead came back, or powers of darkness flung their illusions about the unhappy man who dared to meddle with them—how much was due to the contagion of fear and fancy, or could not be explained in that easy way—I shall not undertake to determine; *Neque in mirabilibus super me*, all that is no concern of mine. One thing I know; that Richard Affane's reason had tottered on its throne, and his very moral being was assailed by the unhallowed attempt to which he had committed himself. In breaking through the flaming walls which girt us round, he had come nigh to destruction; and only that faith was left, and the supernatural yet most compassionate power of Christ was still at hand to save him, the searcher into the secrets of death must have perished.

But he rose from his bed of sickness and, though white and feeble, tasted the quietness of recovered peace during the years that remained to him. They were not many. He was now to

be seen in the little church at Monks' End every Sunday, and did much to comfort the poor and the sorrowful round Araglin. At the last he had the consolation of hearing Mass daily in the library, which had been fitted up as a chapel. And there, one morning after Communion, drawing a long deep sigh, he died, without more agony of body or spirit.

The house was sold and came into the possession of strangers. For years I have not been within its walls. But I never heard of any disturbance troubling the inmates. Its dark shadows, if they linger about the place, are unseen. Linger they surely do. Every roof under which men and women have dwelt with their passionate desires and foiled hopes, is a house of shadows. But few have the gift of discerning them, or of turning back the pages of the Book of Years and reading what is therein written. And well that it should be so! For when conscience becomes a living present and "the books are opened," who shall abide it? Richard Affane has passed into a world which, lightsome as it is within, to us remains a terror and a mystery, the burden of which only faith can endure. My own penance has been, to dream for months together of the figures emerging from the vacant air, the rush of hurry-

ing feet, and the heart-shattering tumult, which, like an earthquake, lifted the solid ground beneath me, and made it rock to and fro. And I have thanked God, on waking in an agony of terror, that I could return to my commonplace duties, and walk the dusty road of life again with my fellow-men.

LOST ARTIE:

A LEGEND OF CANDLEMAS.

I.

A GLEAM ON THE PATH.

IT was Candlemas Eve, which in Ireland for many a hundred year has been kept as St. Bride's Day, and is dedicated to the memory of the virgin saint of Kildare. That was the reason why Grace O'Connor, though she had left the old country when a girl, and looked back on it now like a dream of her childhood, had lighted the blest candles which she took from the box upstairs, and set them on the mantelpiece where they might shine out through the cottage window into the snowy night. "Who knows," she remarked to her husband, "what poor thing may be going the road between this and Alderbury? and the moon rises late, and the snow is driving all ways at once like a flock of feathers. Wouldn't I keep the blind up, dear, and let the light of God be upon the wayside?"

* The Irish words in this tale are printed nearly according to sound.

"Do as you think right, Grace," said her good man from the easy chair, where he was comfortably ensconced, a strapping fellow in gaiters and velveteens, "'tis a wild night, sure enough, and lonesome! I like the curtain drawn and the fire blazing, with Kathleen as she is now in one corner playing with the kitten—don't pull the creature so hard, Kathleen darling, you wouldn't hurt it, I know, but you're so young, and you don't know when you're teasing pusheen,—and Eamon there minding his book in the other corner, with his head in the pictures. But if it was to shut out the light from one that wanted it, God forbid. Let the blind be up, and do you sit down quietly to the bit of knitting, and I'll tell you what Mr. Keighley thinks of doing about the game. He has queer notions entirely, has the young master. And still maybe he's in the right of it. He says he won't preserve any more out of regard for the farmers, they're so bothered with the things coming out of the covert and eating green and ripe as if the sowing was for them, and not for human creatures. I never heard tell of a gentleman speaking that way before. But indeed Mr. Keighley is as tender-hearted as a child, so he is."

"I wouldn't say different," answered Grace, sitting down between her husband and Eamon,

as they called their boy, who was listening (you could tell that by his heightened colour, though he made no sign), and taking her knitting needles, "only what will you do at all, if there's no game and no gamekeepers? And will we have to go out of the cottage? 'Twould be the world's pity, after the pleasant time we spent in it." There was a look of anxiety in her kind eyes as she spoke.

"Why would we, dear woman?" answered her husband soothingly. "Mr. Keighley is not the man to do one good turn and twenty bad ones. When he has no call for me as under gamekeeper, he'll give me the bit of ground on the hill-side beyond us, at a decent rent, and we'll do as well as ever we did, with God's blessing."

"Daddy," said Eamon, creeping up to his father's knee and laying his head on it, "will there be no more hares and pheasants for you and the dogs to go after? What will the poor dogs do when there's no shooting and no coursing? They'll be tired of sitting idle. Won't they be yawning all day and stretching their legs by the fire?"

"Let them learn another trade, then," said his father laughing. "It's better the dogs should be idle than the farmers eaten up. But what are you listening to, Eamon?"

For the boy had lifted his head and knelt in a watchful attitude, very like a terrier with its ears pricked up.

Eamon answered in a low whisper:

"Daddy, I heard someone walking round the house, didn't you, a minute ago? Quite soft footsteps stealing by."

"And," said Kathleen who had been silent hitherto in her corner, "I heard something at the door breathing, as if it wanted to get in. Oh, Daddy!" with a slight shudder.

"Did you ever see such children?" said O'Connor, turning to his wife, who was smiling and patting Eamon's curly head. "Where did they get these *pishoges*, I wonder. There's nothing but fairy tales do be running in their little heads, morning, noon, and night. Was it a dark, slender wolf you heard breathing through the key-hole, Kathleen?" he asked the little girl, with a joking allusion to the famous story he had been telling them of 'The Young Wolf,' not long before.

"There isn't any wolves in England," said Eamon, "but I know I heard footsteps."

"And the breathing sounded under the door," said Kathleen, "only not so deep as a big dog's, like Luath; more like a tiny, tiny dog, whimpering."

"Nonsense," said her father, "who could hear anything in this high wind?"

Just then a distinct, but very low tapping was audible within the room, as of a wand striking the door. No sound could be more plain. O'Connor, who was a devout man, crossed himself. The children looked awed, and did not speak.

"Get up, Grace, and open the door in God's name," said her husband; "who knows but there's some one outside? Though 'tis likely the wind blowing a long branch of the ivy against the door is all you'll find."

Grace undid the bolt, but the instant she opened the door, a furious blast entered, driving the snow-flakes before it, and blowing out both the hallowed candles on the chimney-piece, as at a single stroke. The cottage would have been in utter darkness but for the great fire which glowed and sparkled on the hearth, making a ruddy glare in front of it where the children were sitting, and casting even a distant gleam upon the snowy path outside. O'Connor's rustic home stood by itself in a small garden, which was now smothered beneath the heavy snow drift that, during the last twenty-four hours, had settled on the beds and in every hollow. Farther on to the left a long stretch of covert bordered

the road to Alderbury, and within sight of the cottage window lay a frozen mere. A few stacks, and the outbuildings of a farm which happened to have no tenant except a caretaker, who was then snugly housed in the village tavern, and would not think of returning on so rough a night, completed the dreary landscape. Neither moon nor stars could be seen. The wind ceased its wild lament, doubtless intending to take it up again with renewed vigour; and while Mrs. O'Connor stood peering into the dark, a pause of intense stillness ensued.

"There's not a soul near," said Grace, holding the door against the wind as she spoke. "Surely it was this long branch coming into my face that struck the door."

"Shut it then, mavourneen, or I won't be able to light the candles," replied O'Connor. "Now, Eamon, wasn't that like a fairy blast that blew them out?"

But the gale which sprang up once more seemed to be intent on keeping the door open. Grace struggled with it, saying to her husband, "I don't know what it is that's pressing against me. Wait till the door is closed to light the candles again."

Hardly had she finished speaking when both children cried out at once, and Eamon ran to-

wards the door exclaiming, "Oh, look, look, Mammy; look, Daddy, look, see what is on the doorstep!"

There was no need to call their parents' attention. All in the cottage had beheld the same sight in the same instant, and were transfixed with astonishment.

A child, bareheaded and barefooted, was standing in the snow, on the very threshold of the gamekeeper's cottage—a wee, small child, almost an infant, which seemed to be gasping in the utmost distress, and was holding out its tiny hands to keep the snow from blinding it. A child, which, in the crimson light flung upon it from the fire, was at once dark and ruddy and white. Its clothes were limp rags, drenched with the drift. The snow-flakes came whirling down about its unprotected head. And the red gleam lit up a wan and woe-begone little face, in which the eyes, contrasting strangely with the white lips and shivering expression, shone fitfully, as if a dying glow leaped out at moments from within.

The miserable apparition uttered no sound; it did not even look up. Always it held the tiny hands before it, as though bewildered in the snow-storm and unaware of all else. A bird fluttering into the room and dazed by candlelight

would have seemed no more defenceless than this silent, shivering thing, blown out of the night, out of the storm, to O'Connor's threshold.

"Come in," exclaimed Grace, as soon as she could recover from her amazement, "come in," and she threw her warm motherly arms around the dripping child and carried it towards the fire. "For God's sake, Edmund, close the door. This poor baby is perished," she cried to her husband.

The little creature, uttering neither word nor cry, let her do as she would. It seemed wondrously light in her arms; she could scarcely have said that she felt the burden.

Eamon and Kathleen devoured it with their eyes.

And O'Connor, in grave silence, lighted the blest candles once more.

II.

LOST AND FOUND.

When the door was fast and a comfortable glow filled the parlour, from which the wind and the snow were again shut out, the phantom—for it seemed like a thing unearthly and supernatural—which had thus strangely come into the midst of O'Connor's family, was standing on the hearth-rug in front of the fire, still silent, while the water ran down from its hair and its ragged garments, making a pool about its feet. Grace did not stay to ask questions, but began at once to dry the wretched child as gently as possible with the towels which Eamon brought her. As she did so, a moan of suffering broke from its lips, now parted in fright and anguish.

"Am I hurting you, dear?" asked the good woman. "Ah, Edmund, see how bruised the darling is! There's blood on his hands from this bad cut in his forehead. And his poor little naked feet are bleeding too. He's scratched and torn as if he came through briars. Who did it all to you, alanna?" addressing the boy coaxingly.

"Mammy," he said, in a clear voice. It was the first word he had uttered.

O'Connor lookcd with a painful and alarmed expression towards his own children, who had never in their lives had a cross word from him or their mother.

"Grace," he broke in quickly, "don't ask him any more just now—or take him upstairs and undress him. Those rags are fit for nothing but to be thrown away."

"Wait a while, till I ask him where his mother is," returned Mrs. O'Connor. "We should know that from him. Who told you, darling," she went on, still chafing the cold limbs—"who sent you to the door this night?"

"Mammy told me to knock," he answered. "I knocked. You didn't come at first. Mammy said: 'Knock till somebody comes.'"

He spoke very plainly for a child of between three and four, which appeared to be his age, without hesitation, although his teeth were chattering from the cold. Never, surely, did a child look with such strange, yet beautiful eyes; they were as brilliant as flaming gems. Was it fever that made them burn? It might well have been so, considering the plight he was in.

"Mammy told you?" echoed Grace O'Connor, "And where is Mammy now?"

The child made a significant gesture with his right hand. "Gone," he said simply, as though pointing in the Alderbury direction.

"She can't be gone far, unless the wind took her," ejaculated Edmund. "Here, my little man, where did you come from? Tell me."

"Out there," said the boy, making his little gesture again.

"From Bickford?" pursued O'Connor, mentioning the last village on the Alderbury road before reaching Keighley Park, on the border of which his cottage stood.

The child did not seem to understand. He made no answer, but looked down, meditating, as it were, on the face of the kindly woman who was wiping his damp and wounded feet.

"What is your name, then?" said Edmund gently, when he could get no reply to his other questions.

"Artie," the child whispered under his breath. He was growing dreadfully pale; but the gamekeeper thought he must find out all he could immediately about the lost wanderer. He went on, therefore, to inquire: "Artie what?"

"Artie," said the boy again, and fainted on Mrs. O'Connor's bosom. The other children when they saw that, began to cry.

"Whist, whist, children," said Grace, as she rose with Artie from the floor, "don't be frightened. He's not dead, Kathleen. I'll take him upstairs and see can I bring him round."

"And I will get a lantern and go look for the wicked woman that forsook her own child at my door, in the bitterest weather that came out of the sky this twelvemonth," said Edmund. "Children, be good till I come back. Talk to one another, and don't be in your mother's way. Now mind what I say to you."

They promised, and putting on a great coat, he took his lantern and went out along the road. It was impossible to see a yard in advance. Foot-tracks, however deep, were blotted out in a moment by the blinding snow, which shone like silver as he turned the light of the lantern upon it. Up and down the highway he went on both sides, peeping into the wood, and examining the stiff sedges on the side of the mere, calling aloud in the vain hope of an answer, and more than expecting to stumble across the woman's dead body as he tnrned homeward after his fruitless quest. Might she be hiding, or asleep under the stacks or in the outhouses? He searched everywhere, with the same disappointing result. The wind had taken her, or else she was lying stark and dead in some out-of-the-way nook, where no human eye would discern her until the snow was gone. Several times he went over his footsteps, and it was only when the moon had risen, and he could

see none but familiar objects far and near, that he made up his mind to go indoors.

"Sorrow tale or tidings of the woman did I get," he said to his wife, whom he found in their sleeping-room, seated by the bedside. "Did you see the children in their cots, Gracie dear?"

"I did," was the reply. "Fast asleep they both are, God bless them. Look at the poor *bonuv*," she continued, using an odd term of compassion which is still employed among the Irish peasantry, and is equivalent to 'poor little pigling' in some Oriental languages, "isn't he sleeping finely? I undressed him and washed him as well as I could. Then I gave him a warm drink and he dropped off like a lamb. But sure, 'tis murdered he is. Did you ever see such ill-treatment of a child?"

She turned down the bedclothes off the boy's breast and shoulders. Ah, what a deplorable sight; enough to make a strong man weep! Edmund could not bear it. He turned away.

"Cover the child up," he said, with a tremor in his voice. "Murdered? Yes, not once, but over and over again. Can't you hear him saying, when you asked him who did it, 'Mammy,' as if 'twas the most natural thing in the world? All those weals, and bruises, and whip marks

from his mother's hand! His mother, did you hear that, Gracie?"

"A step-mother it was, be sure of it, or some one that stole him away," returned Grace. "Would a real mother be so cruel to her own flesh and blood?"

"She would, if the drink or some other thing as bad turned her to a she-wolf," was Edmund's observation. "But whatever she is, and whoever did it, the snow hides all. There's no sign of her east or west; and we'll keep Artie, since that's his name, till we know what we should do with him. We won't miss the bit or the sup extra, please God. And there's Eamon's clothes will fit him from the time he was small. I'll ask Father David's advice to-morrow evening. Or maybe you'd see him after Mass in the morning. Anyway, the Almighty—blessed be His name!—sent us the child out of the wide world, and He won't be hard on us for doing our duty."

As Edmund spoke, the boy opened his great eyes and looked at him; and a smile of extraordinary sweetness flitted, like a sunbeam, across his pallid countenance. O'Connor was startled by that fixed gaze.

"The Lord between us and harm," said the gamekeeper, accompanying his fervent aspiration with the sign of the cross, "'tis a strange

child we took into the house this night. One would think he understood every word that came out of my mouth."

Again the lovely smile appeared on Artie's lips and vanished. But who could tell whether he was waking or sleeping?

III.

THE COMING TO THE TEMPLE.

Edmund was up and away early on Candlemas morning, for there was work to be done at the far end of Mr. Keighley's estate, where his strong arm and quick yet steady sense would be much in request. It was late that night when he came back to the warm chimney-corner again, and to the rosy children who made his evening's delight. O'Connor had always been a sober man. He felt to the bottom of his heart that "there's no place like home." But he well understood that no father of a family deserves to have a home, or will long keep one, who does not take good care of it. He had a few books, chiefly tales and songs, including "Cath Fionn Tragh," or

"The Battle of Ventry Harbour," and "The Feats of Fionn MacCumhal," with other such old Irish folk-lore, and he read and read them to himself and the children till they knew them by heart. Never once did he put his foot inside the Green Dragon at Bickford. "'Tis a dragon that is fond of eating the poor people," he used to say, with good reason; and he wisely kept out of its reach.

But my tale has more to do with Artie than with Edmund, though I had a great regard for the open-handed, self-denying man. How the day sped with Grace and her new charge we shall learn easiest by overhearing the talk between herself and Edmund, when he was finishing his meal. The children were long ago put to bed. It was snowing hard, as on Candlemas Eve, in windy gusts. But there came no second tapping at the door. Of Artie's mother, supposing it was she that left him, as the child said, to "bide the pelting of the pitiless storm," nothing whatever had been heard or seen. She was carried off like a witch on a broomstick; perhaps by the dark power which is believed to ride abroad through the air in that bad company on tempestuous nights.

"Well, Edmund," his wife was saying, "and indeed I'll never forget this Candlemas if I live

to be as old as Graine Uaill,"—meaning the famous and redoubtable Grace O'Malley, who figures in so many stories of the West of Ireland.

"That you may, with God's help," returned Edmund, "and me too. But tell me what happened?"

"It was this way," said she, beginning her story, "nothing would satisfy Eamon and Kathleen, when their breakfast was ate, but they must go above stairs and tell Artie they were going to Mass, and there'ud be lighted and blest candles given to them by Father David, and they'd walk in the procession. Would you credit me, but Artie laughed up at them? And oh, he's a lovely piece of a child, God bless him, in spite of the cuts and the bruises. He laughed, and says he, with his little wee voice, 'I'll go, too.' And he kept on, crooning over to himself, like a song he was singing, 'I'll go, too; take me, Mammy.' He calls me Mammy, and puts his head into my bosom, as if he was my own child, Edmund."

"And did you take him?" asked her husband.

"What else could I do? He was tossing from side to side and moaning, 'Take me, take me.' So to make a long story short, I dressed him in Eamon's little frock and shoes, and put a shawl

about him; and—the snow was hard under my foot, across the Park, and the child no great load—and up to the chapel I went. But, Edmund, where in the world did Father David get the sermon he preached this morning, sitting in that big round chair before the altar? Isn't it wonderful the power he has?"

"What did he say, Grace? Could you rehearse any part of it?"

"I could, indeed. And so could Artie, to judge by the look of him. He made me put him sitting on the bench, and he never turned his eyes from the priest's face during the discourse. Mr. Keighley was there, and the young ladies. And beautiful the chapel is yet with holly and ivy, and with banners, and silver grass; and the Christmas adornments as fresh as the day they were put up. So, when the candles were blest, and before giving them out, Father David sat down under the rood-screen, and he told us all the meaning of Candlemas."

"Sure you didn't require to know that, Gracie? 'Tis long ago we learned it at home."

"I did and I did not, if you can make that out. I know those things as long as there's anyone to keep me in memory of them, but after that they do be lost, and something flies away with them till next year. How-

ever, you'd be listening to Father David all day and not miss the time. He told us 'twas this way with Candlemas. Once upon a time, says he, there was a boat sent wandering over the great waters from the most beautiful land that was ever known. And the people in the boat were convicts, driven out from their own place for the wickedness they did. And in the stormy voyage most of 'em were drowned. But the few escaped, and were thrown on a wild island, as bare almost as a rock, and there they lived on the sea coast, thousands o' miles from home."

"That's the fall of man," said Edmund, "only 'tis a fresh way to tell of it."

"So I understood," replied his wife, "and the Father explained it, but shortly. Well, he said, there was an old, old story among the banished people that one day the King himself of their country would come to them from beyond the sea, and he'd forgive 'em and take 'em home with him once more, and they were to build a palace for him to lodge in when he came. You may be sure they built one as fine as they could make it, with gold and jewels, and cut stone. But they waited year after year, till they were heart-sick. And the old people died, and the young ones hardly believed there was a place at all beyond

the sea, though the best men and women among 'em were always watching for the great white ship. At long last, they thought a sail was bearing down to the wild island, the only one they ever saw from foreign parts. And so it was indeed. Only when they ran to the beach and were ready to fall on their knees before the King, what would you guess came out of the strange ship?"

"I wouldn't guess, Gracie; finish the story as Father David told it."

"Neither King nor noble," said he, "but a fair tall woman with a child in her arms, and a gray-haired man following them. And when he said those words, the priest seemed to point unbeknownst to himself to the beautiful Crib of Bethlehem near by the altar, with our Lady holding Jesus on her lap, and St. Joseph standing by. Wasn't that wonderful, now?"

"It was the truth," answered Edmund. "God's truth is always wonderful."

"And so," he went on, "some believed they came from the King, but most laughed and jeered. However, the fair woman carrying the child did not mind them at all, but turned to go up to the palace and the old man along with her, and them that believed went up after her. And every step she took, though 'twas the hard

winter, flowers broke out of the ground, and the sky was lit up over her head, and when she came to the great house, the doors opened of themselves, and the bells in the high towers began to ring. And there came out to meet her a holy man of the people, and he took the child; in his arms and blessed him, and says he to the beautiful lady, 'This is the Light of the World.' And with that, the sun itself leaped down out of the sky, and turned the clothes they were wearing to all the colours of the rainbow, and every one looking on was dazzled and had to hold down his eyes. And all the bare and rocky island was changed that moment to a garden in bloom, and roses and apple-blossom hung on all the trees. 'And now,' says Father David, 'that was the coming of the King of Heaven to His Temple, carried in the arms of His Blessed Mother. So, my dear children, taking lights in our hands, let us walk in the procession along with the good people, after Mary and Joseph, and let us pray that God's angels may be with us too, and the Great Sun of Love shine round about us.' Those were his very last words. I couldn't but think of Artie, and offer him to God as well as our own little dears."

"The sermon, indeed, was made for him," said her husband. "I'd like to think he understood it."

"If he didn't he behaved as well as those that did. When the choir began singing, and we knelt at the rails to receive our candles, what did Artie do but put out his little hand for one! Father David noticed the scar on his forehead, I saw, and he just laid his hand on the child's head to bless it when he passed. I was turning back to my place then, but the child pulled and pulled, and he looked hard towards Kathleen and Eamon walking in the procession, so we must go, too. I never saw a child more *crabbit*, and he so young"—"crabbit" is "crabbed"; in other words, clever and knowing—"he walked like a little angel, carrying his candle straight before him, and his beautiful hair, now 'tis washed and combed, all one flame of gold. And all through the Mass 'twas lovely to see him so quiet and religious. But, Edmund, his mother was a Catholic, for he made the sign of the cross when he saw the others doing it."

"I am glad, for Artie's sake, but it cuts me to the very heart for hers," said Edmund. "A Catholic mother to fall so low—good God in Heaven, how is it? Did you speak to Father David after Mass?"

"I did that same. I told him you wouldn't let the child go to strangers, and he says you will do right. But if nothing is known about

the mother, he will baptize Artie, as far as 'tis lawful, not having sure grounds——"

"Conditionally," interposed O'Connor. "I was going to ask his advice on that point."

"And he told me to tell you that it was an angel the Almighty sent to us, and we should give him to the care of the Blessed Mother of God."

"We will, indeed," said the good man. "You began well this morning. Let us think of him, my dear wife, as the Candlemas Child. Didn't the Heavenly Father send him, too, across the great waters?"

IV.

A FLOWER OF EDEN.

In this touching fashion, "Lost Artie" found a home, father and mother, sister and brother, all at once, though neither he nor they could tell how he came to them. He might have dropped out of the sky, for all they knew to the contrary. Nor was the life he led among them less remarkable than its beginning. The child

was fair and delicate, of extraordinary comeliness, with a sweet and rather low voice when he spoke—which at first was not often—and a gravity and refinement far beyond his years. That he had undergone the most infamous usage was all too plain. The signs he bore upon him were pitiful evidence how he had been whipped and starved, and as a scar showed here and there, had fallen into the fire or perhaps been maliciously burnt. Some of his teeth were knocked out. He was deaf, too, in one ear; most likely, as the Alderbury doctor said, from the blows he had received on the head. Happily, the scars were no longer painful; and, from the hour when Grace O'Connor clasped him in her arms, he began, though very slowly, to mend. But he would never be strong. As he grew up, tall and slender, he seemed like a frail lamp burning with excess of light, almost miraculously translucent.

"Father David did well to talk of roses and apple-blossoms the first morning I took him to church," said his foster-mother. "Did you ever see the like of that blush on his cheeks?" It was wonderfully clear and vivid, beyond a doubt. Yet he was not consumptive. He ran and played, when the fancy took him, with Kathleen or Eamon. At school, where he learned his lessons

willingly, but sometimes not without a visible effort, he was never sad or fretful. But you would have said, if you had watched him closely, that his thoughts were far away.

Perhaps they were in the chapel at Keighley Hall. For if Artie were missing at any time, Grace soon discovered that he would be kneeling by himself before the altar, as if there he were most at home.

"Are you not lonesome, Artie?" she asked him one day on finding him in the solitary chapel. "Why don't you play with your brother and sister?"

"I am never lonesome," said the child, "but I like to be here."

"What do you do all the time?" she went on, wondering to hear him speak in such a manner.

He looked at her with a strange steadiness. "God is there," he answered, simply, pointing to the tabernacle. She could not get the words out of her mind all that day.

There were not many people in the neighbourhood, and only a few children came to the village school. But little by little the feeling grew that Artie O'Connor, which was the name he went by, was a very lovable though a very peculiar being. I can render the impression only by a likeness, and that an imperfect one. Artie re-

sembled some exquisite plant from the tropics, with great golden and scarlet blossoms, which should suddenly strike the eye among pale English flowers, like the snowdrop or the white lily. He was an exotic, a lovely apparition needing such warmth and sunlight as our long autumnal year could never bestow. He belonged to a different climate from ours. The self-control, which became marked in so young a child, the tender yet reserved affection, and the grace which went with all he did—there was no accounting for them. Where had he learned such things? Eamon O'Connor was wild and merry; nor did Kathleen, who was only six on that first Candlemas Eve, show a want of the roguishness that enters into the Celtic composition, whether in girls or boys. But Artie was not like either of them. Not that he was sullen. Far from it. Sensitive he was, and easily shaken by feeling. But he could laugh in his own way, which was strange enough when one came to consider it. He saw, and knew, when things were beautiful; and his delight in them, for a child, was astonishing. He would sit by the running brook, and as it were sing to the music of the water in his sweet undertone. A sprig of fern, a branch of prickly pine, with the dew on it, appeared to give him endless thoughts of

gladness. Often and often he would make Eamon or Kathleen stop in their sport to look at the things he found, bits of shell or a clump of heather, and would try with childish ineffectual words to say how pretty they seemed in his eyes. "Who was it that learned him to talk like that?" Mrs. O'Connor would ask her husband. A bed of purple and yellow crocuses in the garden took his fancy mightily; he called the flowers "snow-children," because they sprang up almost out of the snow. One day, in Grace's hearing, he said to Kathleen that the sun was "God laughing in Heaven"; and when the good woman rebuked him, and told him that God never laughed, he made this answer, "Yes, but I know He does, for He makes all the young things in the world dance and play; so He likes laughing." Yet Artie was never much with any companions except those at home, and, as I said, he laughed in his own elfin or unearthly way, and not as children do.

Of his mother he did not speak a second time. In reply to Grace's questioning he could say nothing; and the mere reference to the past so visibly pained and frightened him, that, by tacit agreement, it was never alluded to as time went on.

One fault he had, which it went sadly against

them to correct. The child's heart was too compassionate. He would scatter crumbs from his breakfast for the birds on the window sill, until there was no morsel left for himself. At school he was always giving his dinner away to hungry infants, of whom there were some who came to him as though it were his business to take care of them. He cried over a pitiful story, and changed colour if anyone near him spoke in a heartless way about cruelty to bird or beast. He was devoted to Edmund, but nothing could persuade him to follow the gamekeeper and Eamon when there was shooting to be done. Very wisely O'Connor, unlike many men in his place, refrained from attempting to harden that gentle nature.

"Let the boy alone," he would say, "there's plenty to shoot and to fight without Artie. If God gave him a woman's heart, 'twas for some good purpose. He isn't made for the rough world."

And so more than seven years slipped away, quickly, "like you'd throw a stone in a bog-hole," said Grace O'Connor, and the Feast of the Assumption, or "Our Lady in Harvest," came round. Mr. Keighley gave his work-people a holiday on the feasts of obligation, for many of them belonged to the ancient Faith, and he was

glad to see them in church. Now, Artie was serving at High Mass that day, looking more than ever like an angel from some old Italian picture, with his bright hair falling in curls round a clear, oval face, where the skin was so transparent that one might almost have seen the blood mantling beneath it. Eamon was swarthy in comparison, and much more robust, as he stood swinging the thurible. A perfect summer's day it was, with stacks of flowers about the Lady-altar, lights burning in great profusion, and the doors of the chapel wide open, for scarcely a breath of air came in. Outside the fields were yellow with ripening corn, which in a week would fall under the sickle. And the organ pealed, and incense rose between the lights of the sanctuary, and, as always on the solemn feasts of the Church, Artie felt that he was in Heaven. No other vision of the world to come could he imagine than light, and music, and pure love breathing round, and the Great Presence made visible. He was supremely happy.

The crowd filled the church and even spread beyond it, for strangers often came to Keighley during the summer months. To-day not a few were obliged to remain in the open air. But as it had been announced that the annual procession, in which Our Lady's statue was carried,

would take place after Mass, they waited willingly till it was over. At length the lines were formed, the choir began chanting the Litany of Loreto, and Eamon, in scarlet cassock and surplice, bearing the crucifix, appeared on the threshold of the church, leading the long procession of school-children in white, which was followed by four stalwart brethren of the guild, holding aloft the throned Madonna. Last came Father David, in his cope of white-wrought silk, with Artie and another on either side, lifting its borders from the ground. There was an instant clearing to make way for the procession ; but as the people crowded in again, a remarkable figure pressed forward, from which, even at that solemn time, the bystanders shrank with evident displeasure.

It was a woman, shabbily dressed in torn and soiled garments, with that repulsive yet indescribable air which stamps the lowest of her kind. This forbidding-looking creature pushing hurriedly to the front, seemed by one rapid stroke of sight to include the whole procession in her gaze, and fixing her sunken eyes on the golden-haired child by Father David's side, never left feeding, as it were, on that gracious vision. As the boy moved, so did she, pulling her faded shawl about her. and listening, as with

clear treble, he joined in singing the titles in the Litany and that ever recurrent "Ora pro nobis," which seemed to make a channel where the music flowed on and on, like a swelling tide. "Mater amabilis, Mater admirabilis," the voices chanted; and Artie could not help lifting eyes of wonder and affection towards the form in starry mantle of blue that was carried above the people in triumph. "Turris eburnea, Stella matutina," so went the sweet invocation, thrilling him through and through, as if a ray had fallen from the Great White Throne of which he had heard Father David speak in his sermons,—fallen and wrapt Our Lady's statue in its splendour. "Ora, ora pro nobis," sang the boy, no angel happier than he, or more blameless, on that day of festivity, which, he was sure, he never should forget. I think it seemed to him that the gates of the world beyond were wide open, and he would never have them close again upon his eager sight. Was he to have his wish? Let the story help us to think so.

The procession wended its way along the Park avenue, then turned and came back to the chapel doors. There was some confusion among the multitude pressing in after it; but the woman, who had kept her place near Artie all the while, stood as close as she was allowed to the sanctu-

ary, watchful of his every movement. The Madonna was again set up in her shrine, another hymn was chanted, and the congregation began to disperse. Artie, when he had taken off cassock and surplice, came out with Eamon, and joined the rest of the family, who were waiting for the two boys. They all walked home together across the Park. Had any of them thought of looking back, they might have seen at some distance the woman who had been such a blot on that edifying and decent gathering of Catholics, slowly following in their footsteps. But no one did.

V.

THE GREAT DELIVERANCE.

They were seated in the house-place, and Eamon was beginning to argue with Kathleen about certain points in the singing of which he did not approve, when a heavy knock at the front door interrupted him. His sister ran to open it. Thereupon, without asking leave, or so much as uttering a syllable, the strange woman entered hastily, and began to look round her.

"What do you want, my good woman?" said

O'Connor civilly, setting her down at once as a tramp. " We can give you nothing but a piece of bread."

"I want none of your bread," she answered, in a husky, broken voice; "I want my son," and she made as if she would go towards Artie, who was sitting the farthest away from her. Edmund sprang up immediately.

"Don't move another step," he exclaimed, putting himself before her, "not a step, I tell you, woman. Your son, did you say? What son of yours is here?"

She was not daunted. "The only son I have left," she answered, in a broken-hearted voice. "My boy Arthur. I know he is mine. I left him at this door seven years ago last Candlemas Eve."

Artie had been listening as to a fearful summons, while she spoke. His colour came and went, and his heart beat violently. O'Connor, distressed, disgusted, yet dreading that the woman spoke truth, looked from her battered, woe-begone face to the boy's clear eyes and forehead. "God have mercy on us," he said in a half whisper to himself, "I believe it may be the truth."

"It is the truth," answered the woman, with violent emphasis, as she caught the words. "That's

my boy grown up, and as like my Jack that I lost when he was twelve year old as if they was twins. Don't tell me. He's mine, and I'll have him."

"But, woman," replied O'Connor sternly, "didn't you throw him from you as you would an old rag? If he is your child, was it you that beat and starved him, and left him to die in the snow?"

She looked down and began to pull nervously at her ragged shawl. "I didn't know as I was a-leaving him to die," she said at last, in a lower tone. "I'd tramped twenty mile in the snow myself, with him on my arm, and naught but a drop of drink in my inside, that day. I don't deny it. I thought I should never get to the next town alive. When I see your light, I says to the boy, 'Artie, go and knock at that door, they're kind people, and wait till they open. I'll be back soon.' Didn't I say that, Artie?" again making towards him.

The boy shivered. "I don't remember you," he said faintly; "this is my mother," and with a great burst of tears he threw himself into Mrs. O'Connor's arms.

"And so I will be still, please God," said Grace; "what right have you to the poor child?" she continued, facing the intruder. "Did you ever do a mother's part by him? Where have

you been these seven years and more? 'Tis easily known what sort of woman you are, only to look at you."

"Be patient a while, Grace," said her husband, "till I ask this—this woman that calls herself Artie's mother, a question or two. What do you say your name is?" turning to the vagrant, whose spirit was beginning to chafe under Mrs. O'Connor's indignant observations. But she cowered before the man.

"My name?" she said, passing her hand over her forehead. "I almost forget that, and everything else. They call me Norry now. I used to be Nora Hazeland when I had a home, a husband, the children that's dead." She looked and spoke as if she were wretched beyond all hope.

"Is your husband dead?" asked O'Connor, who, even in the suddenness of the trouble she was bringing on them, felt sorry for her.

"I don't know," she said abruptly; "yes, I think so. He took to the drink. Someone I met told me he died in a Liverpool hospital. P'raps 'twas lies. But we was long parted." She moved her hand as if waving the subject from her.

"Oughtn't you to be a Catholic?" Edmund continued; "was your husband one?"

"He was not. I married him in a Protestant church. The priest wouldn't marry us if he didn't promise—I forget what it was he should promise. I tried to teach the children their prayers; but all was no use. Hazeland was a handsome man and a fine workman. But he drank, and the home went."

"And you drank," said her questioner in a pitying voice. "What became of the children?"

"The six of them died, all but Artie. And I must have him," she exclaimed, with rising passion. "I came back here, after so long, to find him. I couldn't rest till I knew was he dead or alive. What right have I to him, Mrs. What's your name?" with a fierce look at Grace, "I have a mother's right, and who can take it from me?"

Artie lifted his tear-stained face, and said quietly, "God can."

It was as if a flash of lightning had shone through the room.

But Nora put out her hands to the boy, "Won't you pity your own mother?" she faltered in her horrible voice. "Come with me, Artie. I'll be a different woman, I promise you. I'll never touch a drop again. But I *will* have you," she almost shrieked, "if it costs me my life's blood."

"She can't do it, Artie," said Grace, holding him. "Don't be afraid of her, my darling. She gave you up when she left you in the falling snow of Candlemas."

"Father," said the boy all at once, standing up from Grace's chair and going over to Edmund, "didn't we promise to say the Rosary to-day at the little altar in the garden?" It was a rustic shrine which he and Eamon had put up at the end of a trellised arbour behind the house, where the children were accustomed on fine evenings to sing before the statue of Our Lady which had been given to them by Father David.

"We did, Artie," said O'Connor, in considerable surprise. The others were silent. Nora Hazeland stood biting the end of her shawl, but eager to catch the least syllable from the child's lips.

"Let us come and say it now, then," he returned. "You come too," he added, looking steadfastly at this new mother; and opening the door, he led them, without another word, into the garden.

Edmund began, but interrupted himself after the first prayers.

"What Mysteries shall I say?" he whispered to Artie, "the Sorrowful?"

"No," was the answer, "say the Glorious, please, for to-day, for my intention."

"We offer our prayers," Edmund repeated aloud, "for this child's intention, and that God's will may be done." Then, for the second time he began the Rosary. A murmur of prayer went up, in which all, even to the wretched outcast, joined their voices. From Mystery to Mystery the prayer ascended, up to the very heights of Heaven, until the crowning moment was reached, when the glory of the Mother of God was made manifest, the Woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon beneath her feet, and her abode in the full brightness of the Saints.

There was a solemn pause. "Hail, Holy Queen!" Edmund began, when the Mysteries were ended. But as he uttered the first words, and the rest were taking them up, he saw Artie's eyes droop, his head sink gently on his breast, and the boy fall prostrate at our Lady's feet.

They all arose in amazement and confusion, and Grace, hardly aware of what she was doing, lifted him from the ground where he had fallen. But on looking into his face, she knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that his spirit was gone for ever, although a bright smile lingered yet upon his lips. They did what they could to recover him, but their efforts were unavailing. He would never speak again.

"Ah!" cried Mrs. O'Connor, turning to Nora, who was lying in the dust, while the children burst into tears, "his true mother has taken him. On her own Feast she sent him to us, and on her own Feast she has called him home. Oh, woman, woman, look at your handiwork!"

"Don't vex her," said Edmund, gently, "I knew he was too good for this rough world. We did our best for him, but the Almighty has done better. May His name be praised! Mrs. Hazeland," he went on after a while, controlling his own emotion, "is there any kindness we can show you?"

"Let me stay with you till after the funeral," pleaded the unhappy woman. "I've nowhere to go to. There's not so much as a dog belonging to me left. I did come to Bickford again because I couldn't forgive myself that the child was left so. I've not been a good mother to him. But I didn't think to hurt him by coming back."

"He is not hurt," answered Edmund, smiling with that deep compassion which no tears can express. "Ah, not hurt, be sure of it. The Lord takes care of His own. It is not you that have lost him to-day, for you never knew our Artie, but we that thought him an angel. And so he was. But God's will be done. We

shall go to him; but he will not come back to us."

Edmund spoke the truth. The child of Candlemas had been taken on the wings of prayer, across the great waters, to his Father's home.

They did Nora Hazeland the kindness she asked. Although dreading the least contact of evil for their children, they even gave her the room—it was but poor and humble—in which Artie used to sleep with Eamon. Mrs. O'Connor provided her with decent clothes for the funeral; and if she drank, as was but too likely, she drank in secret.

When Artie had been laid in his little grave under the elms round Keighley chapel, his mother flitted away as suddenly as she came. Whither and to what end? God onlv knows. Sooner or later, we may hope that she felt the influence of the prayers which her forsaken child was offering before the Golden Altar above. Of her, and the thousands like her, we can but say, "God help all poor souls lost in the dark."

There are never flowers wanting on Artie's grave, strewed there by kindly hands. But Father David alone has been told the story of the sudden peril which threatened him on that Assumption Day, and how he was delivered, once and for all, from the evil to come.

The headstone under which he sleeps is in-inscribed with his name and the date on which he was taken, and beneath it may be read that wonderful saying of the Lord, concerning His helpless lambs—

"THEIR ANGELS DO ALWAYS BEHOLD THE FACE OF MY FATHER, WHO IS IN HEAVEN."

THE MYSTERY OF DREREWATER.

I.

A STRANGE CASE.

"WELL, my dear Colonel," said Dr. Leslie with his half melancholy smile, "you have brought me an odd journey at this time of night. Snow falling, wind in my teeth, and the very air wild with Christmas bells jingling and jangling all round the country. And the only excuse for shaking me out of my quiet sleep is that you can't wake Charlie out of his. As if one ever did wake a boy before he chose to wake himself! But let me see the patient."

"Ah, Doctor, you mean to comfort me with your jesting," said Colonel Lascelles, as he led the way along the southern corridor. "God grant it may turn out to be a natural sleep. Our local practitioner, Mr. Crawford, thought I must send for you. He has done his best; but the boy is lying still as death with eyes wide open. So he was found at nine o'clock this morning;

and it is now much past midnight. How long he had been in that way I cannot tell."

They entered the boy's room, and saw him stretched motionless on the bed. Dr. Leslie cast a keen glance at the death-pale face; and without a word took up the hand that lay helpless on the counterpane. He shook his head; no pulse was beating in that wrist. He applied his stethoscope to the heart. No sign of vitality there: the heart was silent, silent as it is in the grave when its work is over. A shade of anxiety mingled with intense interest was visible in Leslie's face. Taking a wax-light from the table, he bent down and held it close to the boy's eyes. They were staring open, great dark eyes that sparkled on the slightest provocation with life and eagerness, as was natural in a youth of seventeen. But now they gazed, if gazing it could be called, upon the flame, as steadily as though it were across the room, not close enough to burn the eyelashes. Were they the eyes of a corpse?

"Did I not tell you so?" whispered the Colonel, "no pulse, no beating of the heart, no sight in the eyes; and a feather would not stir before his lips. What has come to him?"

"Catalepsy," said the Doctor to himself, "and a beautiful case: I never saw anything more

correct. Take heart," he continued, resuming a more natural tone, "I believe Charlie won't hurt. It is suspended animation, as Mr. Crawford has told you, which leaves very little trace, unless the patient has been,—ahem!—*sus. per coll.*, as they say in the genealogies." An unfeeling remark delivered somehow in a feeling tone that made the Colonel's eyes moisten. Dr. Leslie went on:

"All he needs is watching. Send your people to bed. I will make myself at home in this great arm-chair and read pictures in the fire, or listen to the wind howling round Drerewater. If Charlie does not rouse in the morning we will take strong measures. Go, my dear Colonel. When Charlie comes to himself, I will send for Mr. Crawford."

The Colonel was hardly to be persuaded; and when at last he went, it was only to fling himself on his bed and hear the bells of the churches pealing loud or faint as the wind blew the sound of them across the moor. Leslie, meanwhile, sat by the fire deep in thought. What was going on in that sleeping brain, so near and so impenetrable? Its thin walls might have been of adamant; there was no breaking through them. He meditated afresh on what he knew of Charlie. A tall boy for his age, inheriting a susceptible but not frail constitution on the mother's side,

fond of cricket, shooting, and riding, but thoughtful too, and given to solitude occasionally. He glanced at the books on the table, a medley dictated by certain examinations in the near future. "Hum," said Leslie, "here is the sort of training that will make genius and insanity first cousins once removed. The boy has been attempting a man's work."

He turned to the fire again. An hour or more slipped away. When next he heard the clock strike, the wind was hushed, and deep silence reigned through the house. He had fallen into a train of thought that took him many years back and to another country. Suddenly, as if in response to his musings, a voice made itself heard in the room. He started up in amaze. The boy's lips were moving.

"No," said the voice that came through them, a clear monotonous voice, "you have not seen him since he went to India. But you will soon."

"Him?" cried Leslie, "of whom are you talking?" He forgot that the boy was not awake.

"Of Herbert Malison," said the voice.

At the sound of that name in the stillness, Leslie sprang up, and moved with a kind of terror to the bedside. He was amazed beyond expression. Certainly he had been thinking of

Herbert Malison; why, he could not have said. But who besides himself was acquainted with the name, or knew its story? He was now looking into the sleeper's eyes; they were vacant as ever, but the lips began to articulate as if repeating a message given to them.

"Dr. Leslie," they said, "you will see your friend before day-break. He is driving across the moor. He will be at Fernleigh when you arrive. Go and persuade him to quit your hearth. He brings evil with him. Go at once. There is no reason to delay. In three hours I shall wake again."

Silence succeeded the dreadful voice. Leslie was a man of strong nerve, but he felt himself shaking from head to foot, and as he happened to look in the glass, the face he saw there was horribly white. Had his young friend, Charlie Lascelles, spoken thus? Was his the voice that had hinted a knowledge of dark things? But whence, how, by what accident obtained? Was he dreaming himself? Had he fallen asleep over the fire and mingled in his dream past and present? Herbert Malison! The man had vanished thirty years ago, was last heard of in Madras, and made no sign to friend or foe. Dead, most likely. But the voice said he was *not* dead, was near at hand, was even now at

Leslie's door. "The voice, what voice?" he repeated angrily. He was ashamed as a scientific man to have been so deluded. All at once he said to himself, "Let me try the experiment. If I go and find no one,—of course I shall find no one,—here is a good instance of hallucination for the *Medical Argus*. I am sure I heard the voice; it continued even when I had moved from my chair. If, on the other hand, I do meet Malison, it will be a hard nut for the theory of probabilities."

He looked towards the bed once more. All was quiet there. He went down stairs, begged Mr. Crawford to take his place by Charlie, and added that he must ride home. He should return as early as possible. The storm was over; and as he passed by the windows in the corridor, he saw a great moon hanging in the blue, and the snow glittering under its rays. He knew the ways of the house, and in not many minutes he was riding silently out of Drerewater.

II.

DREAMS AND AWAKING.

It was a strangely beautiful night. The winds were at rest; and the moon looked down out of an untroubled heaven upon the snow fairyland into which a week of Christmas weather, out of the olden time, had transformed wold and heath, wooded hollows and sheltered farmsteads. As Leslie came upon the stone bridge that led out of Drerewater, he could not but pause a moment before the weird and fascinating scene. The waters of the wide moat were frozen beneath him, and the ice which covered them glittered like a dim-coloured snake in whose folds the house had been completely entangled. The trees that were bare of leaves showed an exquisite tracery of new-fallen snow; the evergreens were wreathed in the same lovely decoration; and farm-buildings and cottages displayed a grace and quaintness which, with the skill of a careful drawing, was brought out in every line, angle, and irregularity of which they could boast. The winter landscape lay before the traveller as clear as glass, serenely transparent, whilst on the far horizon a shining mist gave it the charm of infinitude, the promise of

beauty yet unrevealed. Leslie was a genial man; he had a touch of the poet about him, and the night, or rather morning as the hour declared it, kindled his fancy. Riding quickly along, he saw his college days at Heidelberg as if they were present; his ramblings about Rhine and Neckar with Herbert Malison; his evenings in many an old inn and legend-haunted schloss; and everywhere Malison, with his commanding air and passionate, persuasive tones was the central figure, until all else faded, and the eyes and brow seemed to rise out of the night, a world of meaning in them. What an enigma the man was! Silent in society, endlessly frank with his comrade; yet his candour did but reveal the deep within which could not be fathomed. Knowledge was the God of his idolatry; but he disdained the common paths and laughed at formulas. He threw himself into forgotten studies, went back to the old schools of medical and metaphysical lore, gave ear to crazy legends, experimented in dreams, necromancy, black and white magic, and sought at all risks to learn the Great Secret. Had he committed crime as well? More than one story of dreadful import was whispered of him. Leslie had locked these things in his breast; but to-night the door was opening again, and as in a dark chamber he saw

the last tragedy in which Malison had taken part. An impoverished physician of Mannheim was intimate with him; an erudite man and the owner of precious manuscripts. He was seized with illness, and Malison attended his ailing friend; then the illness turned to insanity, and ended in a death without pain. There was nothing in all this to give rise to suspicion; but shortly afterwards Malison disappeared, and the manuscripts could not be found. True it was that no case could be made out against him; another physician had read the papers, and pronounced them to be worthless dissertations, in the style of the alchemists, on Seneca's *Quæstiones Naturales*. And Malison wrote in course of time from Madras, saying that he was tired of Western philosophies and should make the East his home. The last gleam upon a mysterious character and a curious story. Was a fresh act about to open?

As Leslie uttered this question aloud, he came to Fernleigh. "By all that is strange," he said, "some one has arrived. There are lights in the dining-room." He rang the bell violently; and his housekeeper appeared on the threshold with a lamp in her hand. Yes, a gentleman had come, with his servant, from London. The name was French or Spanish, and the gentle-

man was now taking some refreshment. So far, the prophecy had turned out true.

As soon as he had seen to his horse, Leslie entered the dining-room. The stranger came forward—a tall, stately man, bronzed and handsome, with dark hair and full piercing eyes. Not Malison! In height the men were similar, and the eyes were not unlike; but Malison had been remarkably fair, and even the Eastern sun could hardly have changed him to such a degree.

In a musical voice the unknown announced himself as M. le Comte de Feyrac, handing Leslie at the same time a letter, which he recognised as from a distinguished patient of his, Lord Milburn. He ran his eye over it, and learned that M. de Feyrac had made a scientific expedition with his friend in the Eastern Archipelago, that he was an indefatigable student of Nature, and was now intent on certain physiological problems in which he sought Leslie's aid. He was also, unfortunately, an invalid.

When Leslie looked up from the paper, his unexpected guest apologized for coming at such an hour; his servant had mistaken the trains, and, indeed, though he spoke English a little himself, he was as new to the country, he said, as the Indian that attended him. Leslie an-

swered what was requisite; and, since he could not return to Drerewater until his horse was rested, sat down and asked a question or two about Southern Asia. He became speedily interested. M. de Feyrac spoke well, with ease and lucidity; and his knowledge of those remote countries was abundant—nay, astonishing. The sky, the air, the sea, the geological formations, the fauna and flora, he had noted all. He chose ever the right word and the scientific metaphor, until the barest fact dazzled like a jewel, exalted like poetry. Leslie felt that he was in the presence of extraordinary genius.

The conversation turned to Leslie's favourite topic, What is Life? The physician held that it was mechanism; the brain was the man, and what is the brain but a refinement of matter? M. de Feyrac smiled; but, instead of replying, asked whether he had any interesting patient on his list.

Leslie, after some hesitation, related in general terms the case he was attending; he could not bring himself to tell the strangest part of the story.

M. de Feyrac listened with great earnestness, and said at the end:

"I am aware your science can do but little here. In Asia I have brought many out of the

trance-condition, using a simple medicament I learnt from a Hindu professor of your art. Doubtless you would not employ it without previous testing, which I could scarcely allow. But may I see your patient? These cases are worth studying."

Leslie consented, and they were by-and-by driving to Drerewater. It was a right Christmas morning—the sky clear, the air biting, the roads hard, and the snow swept into field and hedge by the long-continued storm-wind of the evening before. Leslie was so engrossed by the Count's eloquence that he hardly remembered he was holding the reins; and at the first cross-road he turned the horse's head to the left.

"To the right, is it not?" said M. de Feyrac quietly.

"To the right, of course," answered Leslie, rousing himself, and giving the rein a tug. "What can I have been thinking of? But," he added, with a perplexed look, "how did you know? I thought you were a stranger in England?"

"So I am," said the Count; "but one sometimes has a notion. Besides, your horse was of the same opinion."

Leslie laughed.

They drove on, and as each turn brought them

to a fresh view of the landscape, and unrolled, so to speak, another sheet of the panorama, it was remarkable how the Count's eyes lit up with satisfaction. He might have been comparing it with a mental photograph, and recording, as it were, the correspondence between the outward scene and some inward vision which he had brought with him. He looked, indeed, like a man intoxicated with knowledge; and when they came in sight of the gloomy colossal pile of Drerewater, he leaned eagerly forward, scanning the tower, the gateway, and the wings stretching north and south, with such manifest exultation that Leslie once more became uneasy, and was on the point of asking him whether he had any association with the place. But ere they reached the bridge, Colonel Lascelles was seen advancing towards them, another kind of happiness in his looks. He had the best of news. Charlie had come round, and was now awaiting his friend the doctor.

"The hour?" said Leslie, in a quick tone; "when was it he awoke?"

"Exactly as the chimes rang out seven," replied the Colonel.

Here was another point fulfilled! But M. de Feyrac was not Malison.

While the glad father was telling the story, the

Count, whom he had not observed, kept a steady gaze on him—so piercing, indeed, that it drew the Colonel's in return; and for an instant the men looked one another full in the face.

Leslie introduced them; but when he was giving the Count's name, Colonel Lascelles, retreating a step, said in a husky undertone:

"You have lived in India? in what part?"

"In all parts," answered the stranger easily; "I am at home anywhere between the sea and the Himalayas."

"Have you ever," said the Colonel, visibly controlling some powerful emotion, "been near Kalipur?"

M. de Feyrac's lip quivered ever so slightly, as he replied after a moment's pause, "Kalipur, fifty miles from the borders of Nepaul? I have visited the shrine of Kali, but I met no Europeans there."

"No," said the Colonel. "I did not mean the city itself—abominable place! I meant—pardon me—something in your features reminded me of an adventure in the jungle not far from there. A mere fancy, of course. I will tell you about it later, if," turning to Leslie, "your friend will honour me with his company to-day, as you are to do."

It was quickly arranged. M. de Feyrac, with another searching glance at his host, said:

"Yes, I shall be heartily glad to do so;" and the three thereupon made their way to the drawing-room.

A pleasant group was assembled there, Charlie resting in a great armchair, while Mr. Crawford was persuading him to eat something, and his sister Edith, a beautiful child of ten or eleven, standing with her hand on his shoulder, was looking on affectionate and anxious. She was only his half-sister; but they were much alike in face and disposition; and the pretty mockeries from which, in spite of last night's distress, they could not refrain, told that they were fond of one another and seldom apart. When the door opened they became silent for a moment. Leslie and the Count had many questions to ask of Charlie, which they put to him with the delicate skill of science. But he remembered nothing. He had fallen asleep, and the next minute he seemed to be awake again. Who had come into his room he could not tell.

"Do you remember saying anything to me?" said Leslie.

"Did I?" answered Charlie, "you must tell me what it was, then. *I* don't know."

"Oh," said Leslie, "I daresay it was mere rambling; you may have been practising a little

second sight, as you were in condition for it. But now, you shall talk no more, not even to Edie, who, I suppose, should be on her way to Mass."

"Yes," said the Colonel, "and I must drive to church, and return thanks where thanks are due."

For Edith's mother, the Colonel's second wife, had been a Catholic, and brought up the child in her own religion. But Charlie and his father were of the Church of England. So every Sunday Edith was taken to St. Raphael's, and had a fast friend in Mgr. della Creta, the old Italian priest.

Nothing is more wonderful than the influence of certain men. M. de Feyrac, though an entire stranger, had in a few hours, subdued as if by magnetic attraction the whole house of Drerewater to his control. Edith alone, in some degree, withstood the tyranny of his voice and manner. But Charlie, like the unsophisticated boy that he was, had no amulet against these witcheries; with evident and growing delight he saw the Count near him, listened to his stories, and made him promise he would entertain them after dinner with the wonderful conjuring he had learnt in the East. The Colonel, as he saw the returning glow on Charlie's pale features, felt a father's gratitude to the strange but apt physician. And evening drew on apace.

III.

ILLUSIONS.

Outside the snow was falling fast again; but within, the great dining hall was lit up, the tables shone with massive old plate and curious glass in all the hues of Venice and all its fantastic designs, and the folds of crimson drapery, the blaze of a huge fire of logs on the wide hearth, the golden picture-frames gleaming in its brightness, the painted canvas filling the walls with a crowd of beauteous, and, as it seemed, of breathing figures out of the past—all this, though often beheld, made Christmas a wonder and a welcome guest. Nor were the simple northern festal-hangings, smooth ivy leaves and holly with its fire-dipped fruit, forgotten. It was not a large company, except for the servants of the house, dining to-day with their master. Another guest had now arrived, Mgr. della Creta. He looked a contrast in many things to the French Asiatic Count, being a man of perhaps seventy, of middle height, with wrinkled forehead, and clear eyes looking out under their white eyebrows; affectionate in manner, and believing his creed as naturally as he drew breath; and, as became so learned an antiquarian,

enthusiastic about Etruscan vases and coins of the Roman Empire. He seldom remarked on what others said, but was an acute listener. As so often happens when a soldier becomes acquainted with a priest, the Colonel had an implicit trust in him.

When the time came for dessert, M. de Feyrac rose and disappeared through the heavy velvet curtains that stretched across the farther end of the hall. Very soon these drew to either side; folding doors were thrown open; and a second hall as brilliantly lighted was disclosed, with a vast stage taking up more than half its dimensions. It was the theatre; and the long shining vista drew a cry of delight from all who were present. The Count, meanwhile, had ascended the stage, and was seen near the foot-lights, a tripod at his right hand sustaining a lamp which he was kindling with a rod apparently of crystal which emitted a clear radiance at the further end like a star. After a moment of suspense and absolute silence, the lamp gave out a faint shimmer like a fire seen through water; then a flame sprang up, violet and crimson, and an odour as of orange flowers crept over the hall. A slight, almost imperceptible film of cloud floated from the stage, and in waves ever thinning passed along over the heads of the audience until

it was seen no more. Deep quiet now filled the place; every one was so interested and expectant that a leaf rustling would have seemed over-loud; and in another second the company must have broken the spell or fallen asleep, when from an immense distance the strains of an orchestra broke upon the ear, and every sense was agape to know what it might mean. The Count stood immovable, listening. The music drew nearer; it became loud and clear; and the windows shook to the splendid blare of trumpets and roll of drums; an army with martial clangour and commotion seemed marching past. But, again, as the excited audience rose to their feet, it died away in harmonious throbbings, and whether there was a sound, or only its reminiscence, it was hard to tell. Once more they seated themselves, and once more it burst forth, like horns echoing through an enchanted forest. The air grew full of melody, and from the sides and background of the stage a pageant—were they shadows, were they real?—of ladies and huntsmen attired in mediæval blazonries unfolded itself, in the midst an enormous stag whose tall and branching antlers shone like silver. The clash of cymbals was heard; and the pageant, distinct in its gorgeous beauty, rested while a pendulum might slowly mount and descend. Then, as if

a cloud, as if the air received them, the figures vanished, and the music that had wrapt them in its melting harmonies, softly ceased.

Murmurs of astonishment mingled with fear burst from the spectators, while some of the bolder spirits applauded. But that was only the first of a succession of living pictures that this extraordinary man called up to the stage. He filled it with groups of dancers springing up like foam on the waves and as quickly vanishing; with solemn pomps of Oriental worship—priests bearing their idol-deities, and crowds of adorers falling prostrate before them; with visions of temples, cities and monuments from the depths of the East; with forests that bloomed in an instant, and were swallowed up in wide sheets of water sparkling in the light and breaking out into showers of sapphire. And, whenever he would, the music lent an ethereal charm to the beauty thus made visible. At last, when minds and imaginations were kindled to the height, he raised his voice, and cried that he would let them touch and handle even as they had seen. Holding out his left hand, he laid on it what those nearest affirmed to be a small dark thing looking like a seed. He closed his fingers, and for a space stood motionless; but on opening his hand and turning to the light, a tiny green blade was grow-

ing from the seed, growing so fast before their eyes that it had soon become a stalk with leaves arising out of it. He held up an empty porcelain jar, and laid the fresh grown plant within it; but no sooner had it disappeared, than, as if the vegetative energy of months were put forth in a moment, leafy branches, bearing blossom and fruit, broke out over the edge of the vase and hung down on every side, hiding it from view in their luxuriant twining. M. de Feyrac then came down from the stage, and laid his plant on the table before Colonel Lascelles. A beautiful thing it was, tall, and with large white blossoms like a camellia, the fruit golden and purple berries, clustering like those of the mountain-ash, but infinitely more glorious in colour. Some ventured to come near and touch it, but most were afraid of the mysterious apparition.

Then the Count, breaking off an exquisite branch, gave it to Charlie, saying:

"Keep this to remind you that magic is not an idle name."

Charlie hesitated. He seemed lost in wonder, and a dreamy look came over him. With an effort, in which his kind nature struggled against some foreboding of trouble, he said:

"I do not understand, but I will keep your present, if I may."

He sought his father's eye. But M. de Feyrac said:

"Of course you may. The plant will grow no more, but it will not wither until the spring. And I will give your sister a branch."

But Edith answered, half pettishly:

"Give it to the altar at St. Raphael's, not to me,"—a reply which seemed to anger the Count and made Mgr. della Creta smile.

The priest said to his host:

"Is this natural, think you?"

"Natural," broke in Leslie, "how otherwise? There is no more truth in magic than in miracles. All is nature."

The Colonel frowned.

"Doctor," he said, "I believe in miracles. Magic is another thing. How the music and the phantoms were contrived, I do not know. This device of the mango tree, as we used to call it, I have seen before, though never so charmingly shown. Yes, Charlie, keep M. le Comte's flowers. And now go to rest."

When children and servants were gone, the elders drew round the Yule fire which was still blazing, and a curious and animated discussion ensued between Leslie and the priest, each explaining the events of the evening from his own point of view. The Count was attentive,

but said little; whether an adept in sleight of hand, or leagued with the Prince of Darkness, he kept his own counsel. Leslie, at first sceptical, then yielding a little to the evidence submitted by his polished antagonist, began to enlarge on "Nature's infinite book of secrecy," in which there might be pages deciphered by only a few. Perhaps, after all, there were occult powers, and higher forms of electricity, which might be combined into fresh and peculiar functions of the brain.

"Enough," said Mgr. della Creta; "whether in the sphere of nature or beyond it, they are powers which it is dangerous for man to wield. They are on too vast a scale, and would task superhuman goodness to control or exercise them as a man ought. Be assured that to covet them is evil, to possess them mischievous to body and soul. We must hope," he added, smiling, "that M. le Comte has taken us in."

That, however, was not the conclusion suggested by his previous arguments.

"Your remarks, Monsignor," said the Colonel, "put me in mind of the story I promised M. de Feyrac this morning. It bears pretty closely on your very reasonable distrust of knowledge that is too high for us, and will serve to excuse the apparent rudeness of my behaviour when Leslie

brought us so pleasant an addition to our Christmas party. I cannot quite explain it even now; but no matter. Strange that an imaginary trait of resemblance in the Count should have recalled the incident so vividly."

IV.

THE SHRINE OF THE GODDESS.

"Five and twenty years ago," the Colonel went on, looking gravely in the fire, "I was in command of a district which included the sacred city of Kalipur. My men were nearly all Sepoys; of Europeans I had only a handful; and my nearest English neighbours were a hundred miles away. That is common in India; but I had a hateful task in the government of Kalipur,—a city, I may truly say, given over to the devil. It was the immemorial shrine of the murder-goddess Kali or Durgâ, a female incarnation of the principle of death, and worshipped during ages with human sacrifice. This, however, was carried out in a peculiar fashion. Openly to shed blood on her altar was, of course, since the English conquered India, forbidden; and the religion of this devouring monster, whose hideous portraiture,

adorned with a necklace of skulls, you have perhaps come across in studies of the Hindu Pantheon, took a form which is common beyond belief among Orientals. It became a secret religious order with signs, passwords, and all the jargon of Freemasonry; and it is said to have been united by initiation or affiliation with older societies dating back thousands of years. It holds a secret doctrine, the Tantra, of which little is known. The members travel in twos or threes, and are bound to sacrifice a certain number of victims every year to Kali. They are, in short, devotees of murder. The usual mode of sacrifice is by strangling; and you may fancy in what a network of deceit the victim has been entangled ere the cord is tightened round his throat, for he is almost always an unsuspecting traveller beguiled by these miscreants. At due intervals the worshipper makes a pilgrimage to his goddess at Kalipur. This was my difficulty. I had to protect the temple; and month after month the streets swarmed with murderers whom I could not arrest. Some were men of high position, learned, and grave, as devout as the old witchfinders of whom Cotton Mather tells us. At length my attention was drawn,—but you look tired, M. le Comte," said the Colonel, breaking off. M. de Feyrac was

indeed as it seemed lost in reverie, but he shook off his abstraction, if such it was, and said:

"Not at all, I am listening intently; pray continue."

"My attention was drawn," resumed the Colonel, "by a stranger of distinguished appearance—a high-caste Brahmin—whose visits to the shrine were frequent, and whose devotion seemed ecstatic. His features impressed themselves on my memory, and his visits began to give me unquiet thoughts; for I observed that he came on five or six occasions either before or after a great outbreak of Thuggism in some part of India. I had him watched, and found that he was in correspondence with other pilgrims to the shrine; and, at last, a very keen Mohammedan servant of mine informed me that he had come upon a meeting of the order in a half-ruined and wholly deserted temple, about which the jungle had grown up, some ten miles from Kalipur. I laid my plans accordingly. On a certain dark night I was within a hundred yards of the temple, with a detachment of native troops and my few British soldiers. But now, the spirit of adventure seizing upon me (for I was not the grey-haired old man I have grown to be since), I determined to reconnoitre for myself, and see what was going on within the ruins. I succeeded

in getting near without being observed. On my hands and knees I began to creep through a rent in the brickwork, and the light smote on my eyes, when I felt a heavy hand laid upon me, and a handkerchief flung round my throat.

"My captor, a powerful man, contrived to throw me backwards, and, kneeling deliberately on my chest, brought his face near to mine. Almost strangled, and expecting instant death, I looked up, and recognized in the face bending over me the Brahmin of Kalipur. The eyes of a drowning man, it is said, take in his past life at a flash; and that face—I should know it among a thousand! But what was my amaze, when the murderer whispered close to my ear in perfect English:

"'Your blood be on your head. Why did you come hither? The purpose of our society it is beyond you to imagine. It is not murder—it is, I tell you, knowledge.' He went on slowly: 'Give me your word of honour that we shall be no more molested, and you depart a living man.'

"He loosened the handkerchief a little. You may imagine my answer, which was not capitulation, but still, like his words, in a whisper, for to cry out was certain death. He tightened his grasp again, and I should never have escaped to tell the tale, had not certain of my Sepoys,

following a young officer, come scrambling at that moment through the débris to where I lay. The Brahmin, at the sight of them, fled; the crew inside scattered in a moment, and all we found on searching the temple high and low was, to my astonishment, a Latin manuscript full of medical terms which I could not construe, with a name scribbled in pencil at the bottom of one of the pages. The name was Herbert Malison."

"Herbert Malison!" exclaimed Leslie. "Good heaven! you cannot mean it. Why did you never tell me this before?"

The Colonel looked at him in blank surprise. "Tell you before, Leslie! I did not think it could interest you. Do you know that name?"

"I should think I do," cried Leslie; "he was my most intimate friend at Heidelberg. But go on—pray go on. Did you come upon his track afterwards?"

"Never," said the Colonel; "but I made an end of his gang. I never rested till they were rooted out of the district of Kalipur, and during the last six months of my stay there the shrine was deserted. But neither I nor any one else encountered the Brahmin. My health broke down. I returned to England, and I had as good as forgotten the story, when this morning

a touch of something in your friend's features gave me such an impression that I could have fancied I was lying on the ground again, with the deadly handkerchief strangling me, and the cold eyes looking into mine. As I say, there is no accounting for associations."

"And the book?" said Leslie eagerly. "What did you do with it?"

"Oh, I have it still upstairs. Should you care to see it?" said the Colonel, rising as he spoke.

"By all means," answered Leslie; "but mark what I say. I am going to prophesy. It is ten thousand to one that the book is a commentary on Seneca. Is it not?"

The Colonel, who had almost reached the door, turned back, in a kind of wonder. "You are quite right," he said; "I made out that much myself, though the rest was hieroglyphics. Truly, you are a prophet. Let me fetch the book, and you shall explain how you know about it."

"What a romantic story!" said M. de Feyrac, as the Colonel went away. "I little thought that my travel-stained features were so terrible. It must be the Indian sun that makes us all alike."

"Well," said Mgr. della Creta, "the story has a more severe moral than I should have ven-

tured upon; for it teaches that magic, if it be knowledge on one side of the medal, is on the obverse, crime."

"But why magic?" objected Leslie. "Do you suppose the knowledge spoken of was of that kind?"

"To be sure," said the priest, "all secret knowledge must begin or end in magic. And, as M. le Comte has proved this evening, India is its home."

The Count laughed in his gentle way. "I have heard," he said, "that in the pursuit of science life should be disregarded. Perhaps magic and science are two names for one thing."

The Colonel came back hastily. "I cannot find the book," he said, in a perplexed tone, "it is not where I usually keep it. I must have mislaid it, though I cannot remember touching it this twelvemonth. To-morrow we will search again. Meanwhile, tell us your chapter of this inexplicable story, Doctor. Where did you know this Malison?"

Leslie related what he knew and what had been rumoured. If he painted the deep shades in the picture, he did not leave out the lights; and Herbert Malison appeared in it as a mighty genius, not cruel nor otherwise monstrous except

as his passion for knowledge had swallowed up all other passions, and even the elementary feelings of our nature. In that indeed he was abnormal and a dangerous being; for to feel no pain is the first requisite for inflicting it. Was he superhuman? Then why not inhuman?

"Speak no more of him," said the Colonel, as if moved to anger and even loathing as the Doctor concluded; "a story like that, and at this hour, is almost an evocation of such monsters, whether living or dead. I could imagine him in the house at this moment. But we will commit ourselves to the keeping of the Infinite Goodness, and leave Herbert Malison to his fate. An evil and bitter fate it will be or has been. Good-night, gentlemen, and sound sleep to you."

V.

THE CATASTROPHE.

Next morning the other guests took their leave, while Leslie and the Count stayed, by Colonel Lascelles' request, to make the proposed experiments in physiology at Drerewater, for the Colonel also took an interest in science, though

by no means equal to his friend's. The MS. of Seneca could not be found; but, as if by tacit consent, no more was said of Herbert Malison. It was thought, perhaps, an unpleasant subject. A few days passed, and Charlie's attachment to the Count became ever more marked, until his father could not help noticing how very peculiar it was. Charlie had grown quite well again; but he seemed uneasy when the Count was absent, and silent and afraid in his presence. He did not ask M. de Feyrac any more questions; indeed, he hardly spoke to him at all, yet when the Colonel and his visitor went out together, he would follow them at a distance as if in a dream. Edith, on the other hand, began to dislike their guest, and to wish he were gone; and she laughed at her brother, saying to him one day:

"Why, Charlie, I shall call you the French gentleman's pointer, if you are always at his heels."

But Charlie neither smiled nor grew angry; he only said:

"I can't help it; I seem to want him to tell me something, and I always think he is going to say it."

Another time when he and M. de Feyrac had been in the grounds together, he came out of

breath to his father and said that the Count had offered to mesmerize him; and that he had been about to consent from curiosity when it occurred to him that he must ask his father's leave. Whereupon the Count seemed vexed, and told him he would never be cured of his fits except by magnetism. The Colonel was astonished and very angry; and, after requiring a solemn promise from Charlie that he would submit to no such thing, he with much courtesy and firmness demanded an explanation at the hands of the Count. It was not satisfactory. M. de Feyrac talked of science, and dwelt on the peril to Charlie if he were not secured against his disease. But to the Colonel this seemed an exchange of one disease for another; he had no faith in mesmerism, and he did not understand how so refined and considerate a man as M. de Feyrac evidently was, could have shown such a want of good-manners in not consulting his host on this delicate point. The boy, therefore, was not mesmerized, and his dog-like fidelity to the Count was varied with moods of distrust. The state of things became uncomfortable. Though they did not confess it, all at Drerewater felt as if some disaster were coming; the air grew full of electricity and disturbance. At night, vague unusual sounds were heard, or seemed to be

heard, in the corridors, and everyone looked in his neighbour's face as though a secret which none must tell lay heavy at their hearts. Once or twice Mgr. della Creta called. He was too shrewd not to observe the change; and, without appearing to ask questions, he drew Colonel Lascelles one day into a conversation, during which he was led on to speak of the proposed mesmerism. The priest made no remark, but went away thoughtful. At length a flash came out of the sky, and the thunder followed it in this wise.

It was the last night of the year. Bells had been chiming their "old year out, new year in," with endless variations on the solemn theme; and, after a busy day, the household had retired to rest. Charlie had gone to bed early; and the Colonel was sleeping in his own room, which was situate on a lower storey and in a different wing from his son's. A late-risen moon poured her cold still light through the apartment, when a dim feeling as though some one had called him woke the sleeper, and Colonel Lascelles found himself sitting up, his senses clear and attentive, and the conviction strong in his mind that something was about to happen. A slight sound drew his eyes to the furthest window. It was a French window, opening on

a narrow balcony; and as he gazed, the glass doors slowly parted, a shadow fell on the floor, and a vaporous figure appeared in the moonlight and came into the room. The Colonel held his breath. The face was in shadow; but the height and outline left him not a moment doubtful. He felt certain it was his son. The figure advanced almost to the foot of the bed, and became fixed for a second in statue-like rigidity; then raising its right arm and pointing it towards the Colonel, showed clear in the moonlight. It held something half concealed in its hand. Colonel Lascelles was the bravest of men, but surprise and horror held him motionless. The brief delay, not half a minute by the clock, seemed ages. Suddenly, a flash, a loud report, and the Colonel was lying bathed in blood, his left shoulder shot through. The figure, silently and slowly as it came, returned towards the window and disappeared.

VI.

DARKNESS SMITTEN

But the unhappy father, though shattered in mind and body, was a determined man. He rose and dragged himself, bleeding as he was, to the balcony. It stretched the length of the window, and no more; and it overhung the frozen moat. But when the Colonel came out upon it, there was no one to be seen; the balcony was empty. He looked with agonized expectation over the balustrade, to the moat some forty feet below; but in the blaze of moonlight there was nowhere a creature visible, nor had the ice given any sound of a body falling upon it. Something all at once made him look up. There high above him, on the very edge of the parapet that ran round the castle, he saw a white figure swiftly racing as if upon the level ground. Again he recognized his son. A feeling of sickness overcame him, and had he not instinctively laid hold of the balustrade he must have fallen over it. A second time he gathered himself together and looked up, only to behold the fleeting white phantom come to the angle where the roofs joined, and disappear

on the other side. It was moving along the outer wall of the house, doubtless with the purpose of entering Charlie's bedroom, the windows of which opened on the south. Reeling back into the chamber, Colonel Lascelles rushed to the door, and with heroic effort traversed the space from his own room to that of the sleep-walker. But ere he could arrive the perilous descent had been accomplished; he found his poor boy kneeling by the bedside, fast asleep, his hands joined and tears streaming from his eyes. In vain was every attempt to wake him; and his father, now having only strength left to pull the bell-rope violently, fainted where he stood.

It was a frightful scene that met the eyes of Leslie and the Count, who were the first to answer the summons. Nor did the mystery lessen the horror of that scene. M. de Feyrac seemed a good deal agitated, but he displayed so little compassion that the tender-hearted Leslie would have given way to his anger at such unnecessary stoicism, had he not been engaged in binding up the Colonel's wound and endeavouring to rouse Charlie by calling to him in vehement tones to awaken. He was much perplexed. M. de Feyrac looked on, did nothing, and uttered no syllable. The Colonel could not

be moved from his son's apartment; but happily it appeared that the wound, although grievous, might not prove fatal. In a few hours he was able to speak; and the first request he made was for writing materials. A light or a suspicion had entered his mind: he kept his eyes away from his son's bed, but fixed them often and inquiringly on the Count, who sat watching him in silence. When the note, for such it turned out to be, was written, he directed that it should be at once conveyed to the priest of St. Raphael's. At mid-day the answer came, in the shape of Mgr. della Creta himself. Charlie lay still in trance, and the two guests were seated in the sick chamber. They heard some one arriving, and looked with curiosity towards the door as the footsteps of the visitor came nearer and nearer.

Imagine their surprise when, after a pause, the Italian priest entered, in stole and alb, and bearing a crucifix in his hand. They watched him without a word. Edith, who followed Mgr. della Creta, set the crucifix on the table, as she was directed, and kindled the tapers about it. The priest himself sprinkled the room with holy water, and then turning to the Count said with great gravity:

"I think it right to tell you why I am here.

It is my conviction, and Colonel Lascelles shares it, that evil influences are at work in this house, troubling the happiness of all, and imperilling the eternal salvation of this poor child, who is stretched in trance before us. I am permitted to deal with this matter as Holy Church prescribes. You are about to witness an exorcism."

Hereupon a violent altercation ensued. Leslie, who would not have scrupled, when his temper got the better of him, to call himself a materialist, expressed his contempt for worn-out superstitions which could do nothing but harm. But the Count was furious. His face darkened, his eyes darted fire; and his words, hitherto so gentle, became outrageously loud, until Mgr. della Creta had to remind him that he stood in a sick chamber. Charlie's slumber, indeed, remained unbroken, and the priest held by his purpose. To all arguments he replied that the prayers of the Church, if an idle form, could hurt nobody; and if endued with power, could not hurt the good. To M. de Feyrac he said, "You confess that your secret science is no more effective than Mr. Leslie's experimental knowledge. Suffer religion to bring consolation to the father, if it cannot heal the son." And he took up the ritual with a steady hand.

The quarrel (for it was no less) though brief

had been violent. None, except perhaps M. le Comte, had observed the sudden change in the sky whilst they were disputing; but even as the priest took up his book, a flash of lightning filled the room and almost blinded them, and, the next moment, a storm of thunder shook the house at its four corners. It was a dry storm; there fell no rain with it. The day grew so dark that the light of the tapers came out as in the night time; in the room they could scarcely see one another's faces. Then the priest began to read. It is an awe-inspiring ritual that the Church has prescribed for exorcism; and never did it sound more solemnly than now, as the words floated through the gloom and were broken by the rattling of the thunder. After psalm and gospel, the priest, coming nearer the bed, was about to ask the questions assigned to him, when, with a great hoarse cry, a voice began to force itself through the sleeper's lips, and the air was filled with shrieking. Words came as if hurled out of the bosom and tearing the throat; words so dreadful and unhallowed that the priest stopped his ears, and Colonel Lascelles, though no Catholic, turned an agonized gaze on the crucifix. They were words of mockery, denial, malevolence, betokening deep knowledge and

a mighty and perverse will. Sometimes they changed to a language unknown to the priest and the physician, which the father recognized as an obscure Indian dialect, spoken far from the track of Europeans. For the most part they were like the utterances of a supremely gifted spirit, delighting in evil. To hear such words, though not understanding them, was to be stricken with fear. The storm raged outside Drerewater; and, within, the tempest of horrible super-human frenzy went on without pause or intermission, until it might seem that the bounds of the nether deeps were broken, and confusion issuing thence would make the listeners mad. Suddenly, with a wild cry the voice ceased as hoarsely as it began. At the last word something was seen in the dark to issue from the boy's mouth and fly as on wings across the room, striking M. de Feyrac violently in the face. He fell to the ground; and Leslie, on endeavouring to raise him, found he was dead.

The same instant Charlie Lascelles opened his eyes, and sitting up in the bed, cried out: "I am healed, the enemy has left me." A great burst of sunshine flooded the room as he spoke, and dwelt like a halo about the boy's countenance. The storm had ceased; and Charlie rose up sound and happy.

He was henceforward quite himself again. His disease never returned. What had happened in the trance he did not know, nor had any one the heart to tell him. The confused memory of dark thoughts and ineffectual struggles against them, was all that remained. His grief became intense on learning that, whilst he lay unconscious, his father too had been hovering between life and death. But the restoration of his son proved in no long time the Colonel's recovery also, and he did not die by the hand of his boy, as he feared would be the case when he was wounded.

Two things came to light concerning M. de Feyrac; one was that he died of heart disease; and the other,—a strange discovery,—that the MS. of Seneca lay among his papers. A fragment or two of these gave rise to curious conjectures. On fine Oriental paper, a sketch, evidently many months old, was found, of Drerewater as it appeared in summer, and with many little peculiarities that winter would efface. Another sketch was with it of a sleeping youth, the features so like Charlie Lascelles' in trance (a look they had never assumed in health) that even Leslie was startled. Some other notes, which the Colonel with difficulty made out, were in the dialect of Kalipur. They concluded with

the words, "Magic is the power of Will in Nature; and death holds the secret of Life. Among transcendent powers is that which to lower men seems like murder, but which the wise have deemed the Great Instrument. By dreams and visions the man of victorious will acts where he is not; and the weaker will is subdued to his purposes. Siva, Kali, Brahma—many names, one Being, and one way to Him."

It was an odd circumstance that the branch of the wonderful magic tree given by M. de Feyrac to Charlie, was found lying that memorable day of the exorcism on the boy's pillow, no longer blooming but withered. How it came there no one could tell; for it had been set up on a flower-stand by the window, and had appeared to be in no wise changed the evening before. Charlie said, indeed, that his last recollection before falling asleep was of its powerful and mysterious odour, and that he seemed in a sort of waking dream to feel the blossoms pressed to his lips. But he knew not how that could have come to pass, for he was alone, and the flower had hot been moved from the window.

Of Herbert Malison no one heard more. Was he the same as M. de Feyrac? Leslie thought he was. Yielding at last to the suspicion that spirit has a pathway of its own, this hard-

headed thinker put a strange meaning on the events he had witnessed. The Brahmin, he said, whom Colonel Lascelles had encountered in the temple ruins, was no other than Malison and the Count de Feyrac. He had not forgotten to take vengeance for the defeat inflicted on himself and his confederates; but a thousand accidents might have delayed it, eager as he was before all things in pursuit of secret lore. Suppose him, argued the physician, by means of the mesmeric trance, to have seen Drerewater from afar, and learnt the cataleptic tendencies of Charlie Lascelles; what more natural than that he should have planned the mysterious crime he had almost succeeded in accomplishing? If the Colonel had been fatally wounded and his son left to die in the magnetic sleep, had not that been a delectable sacrifice to Kali?

"You are slow to believe," said Leslie to me not long ago, "that a Western civilized man could accept the beliefs and take up the practices of Hindu superstition. The time is at hand, nevertheless, when the East will once more bestow on Europe a wonder-working religion; and Benares and Kalipur and Ellora will, in those days, be places of pilgrimage and sacred cities of an Orientalized world."

"Well," I answered, "who knows? One comfort we may reckon upon; in spite of her *parure* of skulls, your goddess Kali paints charming landscapes on air, and may call up flowers for our delight from the invisible, which, in M. de Feyrac's significant phrase, 'will not wither until the spring.' That spring, the new birth of a less formidable and more humane system than your man-eating science may, perhaps, be long in coming. However, we Christians have learnt to be patient. But your story has its unexplained haphazards and coincidences; and the Mystery of Drerewater will, I think, in all likelihood, remain a problem for the curious."

Leslie turned again to the mesmeric sketch of Charlie, which he had been showing me, and made no answer.

ST. ANTHONY'S FLASK.

A FRESH READING IN HOFFMANN.

I.

THE CHILD'S DREAM-WORLD.

JULIAN never knew when or how he had first come to have the run of the cloisters and the garden, which were dedicated to St. Wolfgang at Gottesruhe, or God's rest, a few miles from the old Saxon town of Lindenstadt. Neither could he call to mind that anyone had ever mentioned his father by name, or talked of the family to which he belonged. That was an odd thing, which sometimes, when he sat on the grass and looked out over the great big world at evening, as he liked doing in summer, gave him the most curious thoughts and fancies. Was his father gone upon a crusade, like those of whom Brother Cyril was fond of telling, with a long-sword and a red-cross shield, to fight the heathen and conquer the Holy Sepulchre? And if so, was he dead or living? But perhaps, one of his companions had come nearer the mark, and

spoke what other people would not say for fear of hurting Julian, when he blurted out,—that angry, sharp-tongued little Hermann,—that Julian's father was a mere highway robber and thief of the woods, whom the townsmen intended certainly to hang as soon as they caught him. After his quarrel with Hermann, in which this unpleasant word had been thrown in his face, Julian went home crying, and with flushed cheeks and a heaving breast, begged his mother to say that he had a brave and good man for his father. But the pale and silent woman only kissed him, and bade him not mind. If he was manly and brave himself, he should know all one day, when it could do him no harm.

"Shall I ever see my father?" asked the boy, lifting his tear-stained face to hers.

"Perhaps you have seen him already," replied Dame Mecthilde, as she turned to her spinning again.

Julian went away in a great mist and cloud of perplexed, entangling thoughts. Seen his father already? How, or where?

He pushed open a little gate which led out of their cottage-garden into the monastery grounds, and moved off slowly to his favourite seat, high up among the ancient lime-trees, out of which, as from a watch-tower, he had often looked

across the valleys and uplands standing thick with corn, and away to the blue distance where the hills began their ascent towards heaven. The farm-houses scattered here and there, made it a cosy scene; and low down among the corn-fields, and sparkling in and out of bits of covert, disposed in random beauty about the land, Julian could see the streamlets that ran merrily on their course towards the mighty river of which he had heard, and so to the fabulous-sounding ocean, known to some who had travelled far and wide, but in his eyes a thing too marvellous to be real. This evening, while the huge sun, like a cup of fiery gold, blazing from within, poured out streams of splendour upon every side, and sailing clouds, wind-swept and torn, gave the sky a wild, fantastic appearance, the boy sat musing as he never had done before, turning his memory hither and thither, somewhat as if it were one of those reflecting glasses that by skilful management will suddenly light up the darkest corner of a room, and make it shine in the rays they concentrate upon it.

"My father?" again said Julian to himself. "I have seen him?—oh, where?"

It could only have been at Gottesruhe—unless, by some chance, when he was sent for by the

Benedictine Abbess of Meyron, who was so kind to him, the unknown might have come in and spoken, or perhaps taken his hand, never saying that it was his father. But no, Julian searched in vain. The glass of memory showed him many a pleasant day in the parlour at Meyron, where the Abbess came in grandly, wearing her golden cross, and looking like a saint out of the convent chapel. Not once, however, could he recall the visit of a stranger.

Then he bethought himself of the more lively, stirring, and eventful hours which festivals and anniversaries brought him in this dear old Franciscan cloister in which he had been at home from earliest childhood. And a whole world,—could he say if they were dreams or realities?—began to roll out its pages before him. Such a book of pictures! The figures which thronged upon his remembrance now, were mostly familiar indeed; he laughed at the notion of anything mysterious in their faces, attitudes, gestures, or history. He knew them all quite well, from the Father Guardian, Leonardus, down to the talkative, good-tempered Brother Giles, who kept the gate, and had a word for everybody. No remembrance of anything wonderful there!

Ah, but all in a moment, Julian started and put his hand to his breast. He drew out into

the sunlight a small golden crucifix,—so little, that he could hold it clasped inside his boy's hand,—a cross attached to one of those long finely-wrought Indian chains (this, too, was of gold), such as require the utmost patience to thread their links upon one another. And now the child remembered well on what a day chain and crucifix had been his for the first time.

A lovely afternoon it was, the feast of St. Wolfgang, when people came from Lindenstadt and all the country round, to make holiday in the woods about Gottesruhe, and wonder at their Prince Bishop as, in gorgeous cope and mitre, he sang the solemn Vespers in the monastery church. Julian saw himself roaming to and fro among the crowd, his eyes busy, but his little brain still busier, with the mixed and pleasant sight of all these costumes and faces, of young and old, friars, clergy, nobles, country folk, gypsies, jugglers, and the miscellaneous crowd that never seemed to be the same for two minutes together.

And he saw, likewise, how there stood by his mother, Dame Mecthilde, in the alley, not far from the great church, that was bordered by the fourteen Stations of the Cross, a tall erect figure, which attracted him by the singular dress, a long robe of some dark stuff falling to the

ankles, and over it a purple mantle. The stranger's eyes, which seemed to call Julian to him, were most piercing in their steady light. And Julian had gone up to his mother, not without trembling. But Mechthilde, speaking in a low tone, had taken his hand,—the words he could not now remember, and then mayhap was too young to have caught their meaning,—taken his hand, and put it into that of the strange man, and so left them. Then, did they not go as far as the church, and all through the long cloisters? And did not this new-found friend explain to the boy what those pictures signified which were painted on the walls,—those glorious, solemn scenes in which heaven and earth came together, and the martyrs suffered and were crowned, and the angels sang or played their divine instruments, standing on a sea of clear glass mingled with fire? Pictures, too, that showed the child Jesus in His Mother's arms, while one star shone bright and keen out of a lowering sky upon them, and the Wise Men hastened from the East with their gold and frankincense? And did not the stranger seem to have lighted up all this for Julian as in some magic speech that made it clear to him ever after?

And then, as he remembered, they were standing in front of the shrine of St. Rosalie, where

the young maiden's story was to be seen in a great and striking picture, her raiment of blue and red a little faded, over which shone out a most innocent, childlike face, beautiful as the morning, and with such glory upon it as the Heavens alone, being opened to the throne of the Most High, could have poured out. Many people were passing along, and a woman knelt in front of the shrine, praying. Yet no one took heed of Julian or his friend, although the latter spoke in impressive tones, and his dress was so unusual. Here then, came about the strange thing which now exercised the boy's imagination.

For, as he looked at the martyrdom of St. Rosalie, and was listening to the sad and touching, yet noble story, he became aware of a fresh figure, close to the man in the purple cloak. It was a young child, whose large and tender eyes were fastened on his own. Bright hair, falling below the shoulders, framed in such a face, transparent yet flushed with a rosy tinge that came and went, as Julian had never beheld; but the lips, tremulous and slightly drawn in at the corners, made him think of a little friend of his whom he had seen when he lay ill and dying.

"Are you ill, too?" said Julian, under his breath.

The child made no reply. Perhaps he was too young to speak. Neither did he move or smile. He simply held out a tiny hand, in which he was grasping some object that he wished the other boy would take. Julian held the rosy fingers for a moment; and when he let them go (or else they slipped from his own,—he could not tell which) he was holding a crucifix and the chain belonging to it. And on his own fingers he saw a ruddy trace, which he thought was blood.

When he looked up again, the stranger in purple and the child whose expression had so moved him with pity, were gone. Gone, although he ran as fast as he dared, to the door of the church, and explored the cloisters, and searched everywhere in the garden! He could not find either of them. They had utterly vanished. The cross and the chain were a proof, surely, that he had seen the child, and not been dreaming the whole afternoon. Yet how could he and the tall stranger have both disappeared? Julian found his mother kneeling at the altar of St. Rosalie, when he came back from his fruitless quest.

"Tell me, tell me," he said to her, in an eager under-tone, "who was the man? Why did the child give me this?"

His mother took the golden crucifix and seemed to be studying it. "A child!" she answered, "did you get this from a child?"

"Yes, yes," returned Julian, "here, on this very spot. Who was it, mother?"

Mechthilde was so overcome that the tears streamed down her cheeks, and she could not utter a word for some little while. "Oh, my Julian," she said at last, pressing him to her bosom; "kneel down by me, and thank the good, the pitying saint. You are, indeed, chosen for a great task."

"But the lovely child, mother," insisted her son as he obeyed, "you know who he was? May not I be told?"

"I saw no child," said the excellent woman, her voice sinking into a whisper of the deepest reverence; "but if you saw him, happy are you, Julian! Thank God, but keep the vision secret, and do not mention it to anyone."

"And now," thought the lad on this strangely beautiful evening, the golden lights of which seemed to lift him out of the world, and to unclose the gates of Heaven so that he could look within, "was all that a dream? If so, why did it come to my mother as well as to me? But, if it was not a dream?" He tried to see

his way through the mystery and could find no clue. But for the little crucifix which he had worn, day and night, ever since, he would have taken for granted that the whole adventure happened in his sleep, and was a confused reminiscence of the pictures he saw every day when he served Mass in the church, or went along the cloisters to call on his friends at St. Wolfgang's. But a mere dream would never have left him with this real token of its coming in his hands.

Supposing, however, it was what his mother believed,—a heavenly vision,—then he knew well who the child must be.

Did he, also, know the task to which this voice from on high was calling him?

He loved the cloister. It had always been his home. Perhaps the vision was a sign that he should put on the brown robe of St. Francis, and become a friar and a priest. What else could it mean? said Julian to himself, as he kissed the crucifix and put it into his bosom once more.

The sun was sinking, and the darkness came up victoriously from the east. Heavy clouds swept up from the horizon to the zenith. A wind arose and shook the leaves mightily over his head, sending them down in showers, for it was the autumn season. The golden red of the

sun became a dull furnace-glare, and some drops of rain, falling as the clouds passed over him, wet Julian's fair hair as with a chilly damp. He felt cold and uncomfortable, and was almost frightened, though he knew not why. It seemed to him a long time ere he could run across the grounds of Gottesruhe, and find himself in his mother's cottage. However he must start, in spite of his fears, and he set off at a run. When he came to one of the turnings in the path he looked up to the wide sky which spread out towards the distant hills, and it appeared as if it were draped in an immense purple mantle, through which the last rays of the sun shot a stormy and threatening light more terrible than any darkness would have been. He ran home all the faster for that weird and desolate vision overhead.

"I was watching for you, Julian," said his mother, meeting him at the door; "I dreaded lest you should be caught in the rain; there will be a storm to-night."

II.

BEFORE THE BATTLE.

A storm, indeed, burst forth as soon as he had got inside, and was snug by the chimney-corner. Such a storm as people talked of long afterwards, and to Julian most memorable, for it blew down the ancient lime under which he had on so many an evening watched the sunset. But, as he always thought, a still more solemn event had been marked by that incessant lightning, and the peal on peal of thunder which kept many awake in their beds that night. The meditation, narrated briefly in the foregoing chapter, had, so to speak, crystallized his vague boyish longings, and shown him what he must do when he grew to man's estate.

By temperament, Julian was certainly religious. There never had been a time when he did not find his delight in listening to the music of the choir, in watching the sacred ceremonies round the altar, and in wishing he were allowed to take part in them. But all this might have left him deaf or blind to the spiritual world, of which outward things, though most venerable, serve but as the veiled entrance. Julian had spirit-eyes, too, as well as the soul of an artist.

His thought grew large, his being seemed to put on wings and to float upward, whenever the name of God or religion sounded in his ears. These things were far more real to him than what he saw and handled. They were not poetry, nor romance, nor the sentiment which worldly minds are always supposing to be the heart and substance of a belief they do not share. To those who resemble Julian, business, pleasure, amusement, and all the incidents of daily life seem, it may be, solid in their way, but only as the hard dull earth on which they tread. Religion is the infinite, over-arching sky, now radiant and clear, now darkening with fearful storms, but always high above them, sacred, sublime, and to be worshipped, with its golden sun to rule the day, and, in the night-time, its throbbing stars glittering lonely in their far-off depths, most beautiful, most solemn heralds of eternity. Spirits so finely touched cannot be satisfied with the good things which earth affords, however pleasant or alluring.

Julian was a boy of genius, also. He learned his Latin from the parish priest, as if in play; wrote a fine mediæval hand; could draw from nature; and, having such deep thoughts as I have hinted, never imagined that these accomplishments were worth much in themselves. His great friend,

Father Leonardus, observed the boy closely, but kept his judgments, whatever they were, to himself. Leonardus, who had taken his vows late in life, and knew the world as a courtier, soldier, and diplomatist, measured things by a high and severe standard, mild as was his speech and to all conciliatory. He had long been conversant with the ways and habits of Julian, whose bearing, even as a child, was noticeable for its reserve and a certain stubbornness when once he had set his heart upon a thing. That the boy was incomparably superior to his playmates, only Leonardus, perhaps, of all those who came in contact with him, would have pronounced. Others had no sufficient knowledge or insight by which to arrive at such a conclusion. Only genius at once recognizes its kindred.

Trained up in the order, Julian would become one of its most distinguished members, said Father Guardian in his own mind. Yet Leonardus never so much as breathed a whisper to the effect that the boy was made to be a Franciscan friar. He let him alone, and would not have those around him interfere. "If the Master calls, it is enough," he said, "why will you meddle with His work?"

One day, Julian spoke of his own accord. Dame Mechthilde, feeling herself ill, had been

moved to tears in dwelling on her boy's future, as he sat by her bedside; and besought him to take shelter from life's temptations with friends who would always be true to him. Leaving her with affectionate words, he went straight to Leonardus; told him how long it was since he first thought of becoming a friar; and, hesitatingly, mentioned the incident of the crucifix given to him by the unknown child, as perhaps a divine intimation.

Father Guardian listened, and then, taking his hand, said to him very gravely, "My dear Julian, you are young, and my hair has grown grey in the world and the cloister. Let me give you one simple piece of advice: you may need it by and by. It is the Jews that seek signs, as the Greeks long after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified. You must look upon all visions as though they were the dreams of the night and nothing more. If real, they will do the good for which they were sent, in any case. If delusions, the less you mind them, the less they will harm you."

Not a syllable more would he say regarding the incident. Julian felt slightly disappointed. But he held to his purpose, becamc an exemplary novice, and in time took his solemn vows.

The story passes over a long space at this

period, which, however, it is not difficult to fill up. His own account, given many years afterwards, tells us truly that these were the happy days of his life. Well did that house deserve its name! Heavenly peace, a tranquillity that no tempest troubled, made its presence felt among the brethren. Poor and simple folk, for the most part drawn from the ranks of the country-people, or the middle class in the towns round about, they still included some who had given up rank, influence, and fortune, either disgusted with the world's pleasures,—once sweet on their lips,—or, like Julian himself (though he had no heritage to forsake) gladly turning away from deceptions ere they put forth their enticing spells. The rule of the Order was kept with much strictness. As for the house itself, situated boldly on the flank of a noble hill, sheltered by forests immemorial from the fierce winter-winds, and, as Julian had so often thought, commanding a prospect which in its changes, from the fresh green spring to mellow autumn, was ever a call to meditate how Providence has clothed with loveliness the waste places, or has stirred up men to make them beautiful by their toil,—that house, I say, seemed to the travellers who came thither, like the grand finish to a landscape which was one of the most impressive and delightful to be found in the Saxon Switzerland.

The monastery, always clean and bright, was austere, a deep silence reigning within its walls, and the Friars intent upon works of charity, or given up to study, according as their dispositions prompted them. Unless by special leave, those from outside could not go beyond the guest-room; but the great and beautiful church, with its treasury of relics and the paintings for which it was celebrated, drew many visitors in the course of the year. Perhaps Julian never felt the charm of his vocation so strongly as when, in choir or at the altar itself, he joined in the solemn services going forward beneath that roof. The architecture, lofty and pointed, was such as to remind him of the golden pinnacles and palaces in Heaven, which his childish fancy had pictured in the clouds, on evenings when the sun went down gloriously. And the stained windows, full of sacred colour, so strange, ethereal, and translucent, seemed to him an endless poem, a liturgy of the angels, which he could never weary of studying.

Add, now, to these unearthly and pure delights, the organ-music, searching deep into his heart, while High Mass with its unspeakable mysteries was gathering in the sanctuary a crowd of golden-vested figures, or Evensong rose amid incense, and the *Magnificat* rehearsed the story

of redemption; bear also in mind, as I have said, that these outward semblances, though so overpowering to the sense, were yet, to the ardent faith of Julian, as of his companions, mere shadows, echoes from afar, and stammerings as of infancy, when compared with the divine things they contained or symbolized, and is it any wonder if, looking back through a life's vista, he called St. Wolfgang's "Porta Cœli," the Gate of Heaven! His conscience was at rest; his intellect daily feeling its mastery over the tasks offered it; and his naturally blithe temper inspired by youth, made him march onward as to the sound of entrancing music. Rainbows seemed to play about his head; flowers of delicate hue to spring up at his feet. When Dame Mecthilde saw her boy's face lighted with a smile which rippled over it in sheer, yet not unthinking happiness, she lifted up her hands in pious thanksgiving. But the Abbess Ermyntrude, to whom he paid an occasional visit, as in duty bound, although sharing Mecthilde's pleasure, was now and then anxious. "He has never been tried," she would say; "wait, Mecthilde, or rather, pray with all your soul, that Julian may come out of his first battle convinced that he must fight hard who desires to win. These fervours of the novice, when they are over-intense, frighten me."

Still, what could Julian do? The battle was slow in beginning; and he made, as it should seem, a fair and sensible use of the interval. He studied, and his success passed even the Guardian's expectations; he went through the accustomed training, and was ordained priest. Then by way of leading him to take some part in the practical life of the house, Father Leonardus set him over the church and sacristy. His old friend, Brother Cyril, was now getting on in years, and, feeling tired, had made the request that Julian might have the charge that during more than half a century had been entrusted to him, of the precious things which their treasury contained. As he suggested, so it was done. The next morning after Mass, Cyril, with his keys in his hand, took Julian into the great chamber of relics, which none but himself could open, and locking the door again securely, bade him prepare for an interesting examination.

III.

A STORY FROM THE DESERT.

It was a dark vaulted room, with wainscoting discoloured by age round the walls, and many huge chests, or cabinets, in carved wood, adorned with grotesque and fanciful figures, taking up most of the space, into which Julian entered with Cyril. High windows, dusty and full of cobwebs, admitted an uncertain light, which seeming to sleep on the floor, gleamed unexpectedly here and there, as it fell upon the silver, or gold, or polished lacquer, of the vessels and cases wherein the relics were preserved. A very ancient and multifarious collection they seemed. In these costly pixes, wrought with extreme care, Cyril bade his companion remark the fragments of cloth, or silk, or linen, the tiny charred remains evidently snatched out of the fire, the instruments of torture, the congealed blood, and drops of sacred oil, the innumerable curiosities in the shape of parchment or even papyrus volumes, and the strangely-formed stones and gems whose value no jeweller could estimate (for their worth consisted in their association with the Saints) which made the treasure of St. Wolfgang unequalled in all Eastern Germany.

"But," continued Cyril, when he was unlocking one cabinet which he had left to the last, "here, Father Julian, is the most wonderful, the most curious, and the most astonishing relic which the monastery possesses. To the brothers, generally, its very existence is a secret. None but Father Leonardus and I have ever handled it. Nor could the Guardian have shown a greater confidence in anyone,—especially considering how young you are still, Father Julian,—than in allowing you to have the absolute control of such a dangerous thing. I tremble, even I, old as I am, when I think what a temptation it might have been to me. But, thank Heaven, it was never my way to trifle with occasions of sin."

"Really, Brother Cyril," said Julian, nettled by the disparaging remarks of the vain-glorious friar, "what is this wonderful relic? Will it burn me if I touch it?"

"Be serious," returned the old man; "it is no jesting matter. I have never touched this case," taking one out as he spoke, "without feeling a thrill run through me. See, only this key will open it," and he held up in the light, so that Julian might have a clear view, what appeared to be a long-necked flask, in wrought silver, which he had extracted from the case.

Julian could not help fixing his eyes upon

it. The antique workmanship, and the peculiar form, of the flask, convinced him that it must be something rare.

"Is it very old?" he asked Cyril.

"Old?" echoed Cyril, "ay, fourteen hundred years at least; and who knows how much older? Ugh," he continued, sinking his voice and laying the thing down as if it had stung him, "I am sure it is true, as the story says, that there is a diabolical magic philtre inside it. The weight, and a kind of sudden heat that comes into your hand as you are holding the accursed vial, would be proof enough for any Christian."

"But in God's name, what is it?" cried Julian, "and why do you keep it among these holy relics?"

"It is,—it is,—" replied Cyril, hesitating as he eyed the young priest sharply, "but remember, you are sworn not to tell anyone without leave from the Guardian—"

"Yes, of course," broke in Julian, "but I must know, it is my place as sacristan to be acquainted with the facts of the case."

"True, true, but the fearful risk! You see, Julian," the old friar went on, laying an affectionate hand upon his shoulder, "I should not like any harm to come to you. And this vial—why, it belonged to the Evil One himself! It

goes back to the time when he walked about the world in visible shape, tempting men to their ruin. In the locked catalogue, of which you will keep the key, it is called,—read here for yourself, —'St. Anthony's Flask.'"

"But why St. Anthony?" exclaimed Julian, curious, and a little alarmed, while, being of a much more sensitive temperament than Brother Cyril, he was by no means sceptical as regarded wonders in the present or in the past.

Cyril looked round anxiously. "I would not dare to tell this story except in a sacred place," he said under his breath, "and yet I sometimes think it is but an allegory. However, judge for yourself—you have a stronger head than mine.

"I need not tell you what the whole Church knows concerning St. Anthony the hermit; how he gave up all things, fled from Alexandria when a lad of seventeen, and retired alone into the wilderness, there, like his Great Example, to be tempted of the Evil One. His trials, his penance, and his visions, are famous. No one suffered more at the hands of the Tempter; and none came out of the struggle after winning a greater victory.

"Well, the story runs,"—again Cyril broke off, and looked about him in the chiaroscuro

of the treasure-chamber, as if to make sure that they were alone,—"the story, as I was saying, runs that one evening, at the hour of twilight, St. Anthony became aware of a dim figure moving towards him, like a cloud, across the waste. Long experience had put him on his guard. He became attentive, though in no wise terrified. But imagine his astonishment when he saw that the unknown personage was clad in a torn and ragged cloak, out of the rents in which a number of silver flasks, or vials, seemed to thrust their necks. Anthony started back, and the figure, growing every moment taller, asked him, with a sneering laugh, whether he would not put his lips to one of these precious bottles?

"But the hermit, despising the enemy as was his wont, asked in turn: 'Why, thou most wicked one, comest thou in this strange guise before me?' Then said the Tempter, 'It is a way of mine, Anthony. As I go about the world, carrying my flasks, many a one that meets me is amused and curious, and would fain know,—as thou wouldest, also, my saint,—what I have in them. And the foolish man slides up to me, and takes out the stopple when he thinks no one is looking, and he tastes this and that in the shadow of my ragged cloak. And it will go

hard with me, but he shall find one of my elixirs to his liking. Then is he mine, and he drinks himself drunk, and my spirit is in him, so that henceforth he belongs to my kingdom, and serves me. Thus, Anthony, I do my business and make a profit among men, thanks to my cunning and their curiosity.'"

Cyril paused, not unwilling perhaps to give Julian a chance of saying how well he had told the story. But the young man was deep in thought. "How awful!" he sighed rather than spoke, when his lips unclosed.

"Awful you may well call it," resumed Cyril, "but now I am coming to the point of my narrative. Thus far, the legend stands in all our books. But, according to the document you will find inside this case, we are told that when the demon was going away, he took out certain of the enchanted flasks, and, laughing to himself with fiendish glee, laid them on the sand in front of Anthony's hut."

"Oh, the cunning tempter," cried Julian, "how well he knows our weakness!"

"He has been studying the ways of the children of Adam long enough to know their blind side," returned Cyril, "but the hermit, now confirmed in grace, would never have stooped to take up these leavings of Satan, had he not dreaded lest

some among the disciples, travelling that way, might fall into the snare."

"What! did he actually touch the vials?"

"He not only touched them, but carried them away into his cell, and hid them in a dark corner. And the story says that one day, when Anthony by chance laid his hand upon a flask,—he was searching for something else, and had perhaps forgotten all about them,—the stopple came out of itself, a thick smoke filled the cave, and upon the smoke appeared in glaring, hateful colours, such phantoms from the lower deeps, that the saint was stricken with horror. By prayer and fasting he drove them from the place, but not until many days were past. Now then, if we may believe these papers, here is one of the flasks which were found on the death of St. Anthony in his cell."

"I know he left his cloak, and perhaps other things, as a personal remembrance to the great St. Athanasius of Alexandria," observed Julian, as if reasoning the matter out to himself.

"Quite so," was Cyril's rejoinder, "and then if we suppose the Alexandrian relics were saved when the Islamites took the city,—they might have been conveyed by fugitives to Constantinople and elsewhere, and, like the bodies of various saints, brought into our countries at the

time of the Crusades. This, in fact, is the account we have received."

"However," Cyril went on, as the young priest did not answer, "I know my own feeling, and the mere sight of this doubtful relic fills me with fear. You, my dear Julian, with your lively imagination and confidence in yourself,—it is quite natural when one is young and untried,—take my advice, and never so much as open the casket, let alone the vial. Put the whole thing away, lock it out of sight, as I shall now do, and be satisfied with the story I have told you from our archives."

Hereupon, the well-meaning though garrulous old brother, fastened the cabinet into which he had put the relic while he was speaking, and gave Julian his bunch of keys. They left the treasury in silence. The impression made upon our young friend by Cyril's legend was no less powerful than unpleasant; so much so, indeed, that when he found himself alone, Julian detached the key of the philtre from the bunch, and thrust it away deep among the papers and manuscripts in his writing-desk.

But perhaps it is only a hermit proved by long temptations, who can keep with safety the keys of dangerous knowledge.

Julian's temptations had yet to be faced and overcome.

IV.

"PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF."

Among the professors of the Seminary which, during his noviciate, our friar had attended, there was one whose eloquence in the pulpit had drawn him mightily. When the preacher, with forcible words and fit and graceful action, seemed to carry his audience irresistibly along with him, Julian's heart beat violently; his breath came and went under the sway of an emotion which he could not master; and, had it not been for the shyness of youth, as well as the sanctified place in which they were gathered together, it seemed to him that he must leap forth to the altar steps, there to deliver the message that was burning within him. And when he was back again in his cell, he repeated the sentences, he went through the gestures, which had taken his fancy. "I too will be a preacher," he murmured, in the spirit of the well known Italian artist.

Fortune,—shall we say?—favoured our youth. The friar who was wont to expound the Sunday's Gospel in the monastery, had grown old and feeble. Leonardus, though an admirable speaker when he chose, had little time for a task which

demanded preparation. And so it came to pass that Julian, on a certain morning, mounted the pulpit. He began nervously to read the manuscript he held in his hand; but by a sudden inspiration, put it from him, and speaking out of his innermost heart, with fire, tenderness, and dramatic energy, revealed himself to all who were present as a born preacher. The Guardian was greatly moved. He came after Mass and embraced his pupil with tears of joy. Cyril, too, and the rest were delighted. But who shall paint the tumult of feelings with which Julian retired to his cell? Exultant, intoxicated, trembling as at a miracle wrought by his own hands, nay, full of surprise, like a man who has unexpectedly come into a great inheritance, he rejoiced in the prospect opening before him. Could he have seen the face of his guardian angel that day, he might have been sobered. "Take care," a warning voice would have sounded in his ear. But no such voice was audible.

The news spread, and henceforth St. Wolfgang's became, what it never had been hitherto, a fashionable resort on highdays and holidays. Crowds hastened from far and near, filling the church to overflowing, that they might enjoy the spectacle of this fair-faced, ascetic young Franciscan, who looked in his rough brown habit

like a seraph in one of those Florentine pictures which are nothing but lovely heads over monkish garments. And he was innocent of guile, our poor Julian! Not yet singed by the flames of worldly passion, he rehearsed with all the conviction of inexperienced youth, those grave commandments, illustrated by stories new and old, which were laid upon Christians. He thundered against sin and Satan. He talked much of counsels of perfection, heroic sanctity, and renouncing all things. With the utmost sincerity he did so; let us not wrong the unhappy preacher who mistook his aspirations for achievements. It is not an uncommon fault; but few pay such a bitter price for it as Julian.

One curious result of his new way of living I must not pass over. As a boy, he had been given to day-dreaming, and the unknown circumstances of his birth and bringing up gave no slight impetus to a fancy which called rather for the rein than the spur. During his noviciate, his castle-building had ceased of itself, thwarted and discouraged by the continual exercises in school and chapel, in which the young men were engaged. But now, as if the sun had gone down and night with its visions fluttered around him, Julian did nothing but dream and muse after his boyish fashion. The sermons he was always

preparing, took a palpable shape and form. They were most effective parables or allegories, with golden and silken threads of argument shot through them from end to end. As in a waking dream, the young priest stood before his audience, looking away over their heads into some region which to him alone was visible. He spoke as one inspired. And the misery was that he believed in his own inspiration.

"Julian, Julian, my dear friend, what has come to you?" said Leonardus, at the conclusion of a discourse that had sent hundreds amazed and wondering to their homes. "You avoid, not only me, who have ever been a father to you, but all our brethren; and in the pulpit which you have just now quitted, whose was the spirit that spoke through your lips? The people are shaken, terrified, excited; but, alas, Julian, they do not seem to be converted. Is preaching the same thing as acting? Forgive me, if I hurt you."

"You do hurt me," said Julian, flushing, and with his face turned away, "I an actor? I preach what I believe, Father Guardian."

"Yes, but you dramatize what you believe, too," replied Leonardus, "and that is not good. Beware lest your gift of rhetoric prevail over the grace which is in you."

His pupil was not listening. "I suppose,"

muttered Julian to himself, as he went upstairs, "these old men are jealous. Well, let them be jealous. I shall go my own way."

And he did. His success, remarkable enough at Gottesruhe, was greater still in the town of Lindenstadt, and the religious houses where he was called to preach retreats. The deep melodious voice, the sudden flashes of imagery, the appealing and impassioned gesture, sent a current of life and emotion through the crowds above which he stood triumphant, like a victor in his chariot on the old Roman festivals. In his secret soul, Julian, who busied himself much with commentaries on the Apocalypse of St. John, and was always recalling to his hearers the prophetic mission with which St. Francis and his first companions had been endowed, held that he himself was one of those who had a message for the last days.

Convinced that his boyish dreams were from above, he began to apply in this dangerous manner words and symbols to his own person which befitted only the chosen of the Almighty. He was "the man clothed in linen with a writer's ink-horn by his side," whom the Prophet had beheld in vision, when the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherubim to the threshold of the temple.

Or he was even the angel of the Everlasting Gospel flying through the midst of Heaven, proclaiming things hidden from the foundation of the world. His nights were spent in prayer, but how could such prayer as this bring anything but destruction?

Thus, then, it came to pass that Julian was preaching, on the feast of St. Anthony, to a thronged church. After some brief account of the hermit's penances and temptations, he went on without exactly meaning it, to tell the story of his Elixir (not mentioning the relic as preserved at that moment in their treasury), and in the allegorical manner which he so deftly practised, applying the legend to his hearers' daily life. While in the full tide of discourse, he happened to glance down towards the open door of the church, and there, leaning against a column, he perceived a tall figure, in a dark-purple cloak, looking steadily at him, with its arms folded across its breast. The man's face seemed as white as a sheet; and his large dark eyes pierced like a dagger into Julian's conscience.

The preacher hesitated, stammered, caught up the thread of his sermon with difficulty, and could not take his eyes off those of the intruding listener. He felt that some one who

hated and despised him had drawn nigh. All at once, the remembrance flashed across him; it was,—surely it must be,—the unknown pilgrim he had seen in boyhood on St. Wolfgang's day,—the man who had taken him by the hand, led him round the cloisters, and explained the paintings to him,—the companion of that child from whom he received the crucifix! Great Heaven, was it not the enemy of mankind?

Drops of perspiration stood out on Julian's brow. He broke down utterly, and could not recover; there was a painful silence. And still the stranger fixed on him his hard contemptuous gaze. But, shaking himself as in a fit of madness, the preacher, quite lost for the moment, and betraying indirectly the fancies which had such a power in his meditations, cried aloud, "Away, away, thou traitor to God and man; give place to the holy one,—I myself, I and no other, am the hermit Anthony!" Confusion and uproar ensued; for Julian had fallen down in the pulpit, and was carried out fainting.

V.

TEMPTING GOD

What a mortification for his pride! When the young man came to himself in solitude, his day-dreaming had received the rudest of shocks. The people would think him insane, "and perhaps I am," he said with a shudder. How else interpret the words which had passed his lips, or the repetition of that idle dream in childhood, now become a terror outside of him by dint of dwelling on it?

"So bad began, but worse remained behind," as our great poet tells us. Julian appeared in the chair again, desirous to blot out his failure by fresh triumphs of eloquence. But the enthusiasm which had inspired him was gone; and when he listened to the bald commonplaces that he now found himself giving forth it was too much. He finished abruptly, came down, and refused ever to preach again. The crowds of fashionable persons whose ears he had tickled, went elsewhere in search of amusement. Julian was alone now, indeed. Within and without, darkness encompassed him. The routine of the monastery called upon him to make exertions daily which he went through like a machine.

But his once vision-haunted solitude was empty. His heart seemed full of dust, his eyes were tired of the sight of things.

At this period it was that a travelling Count, Graf von Winkelried, came with his major-domo to St. Wolfgang's; and Julian had the duty, as sacristan, of showing him their treasures. When they had seen the other curiosities, the major-domo, who was of the troublesome class called antiquarians, insisted on viewing the contents of that special cabinet in which St. Anthony's flask had remained untouched for years. Julian found it necessary to relate the legend, adding Brother Cyril's caution, as a part of the rubric, if I may so express myself. But the Count and his friend laughed heartily, and declared they must open the chest. Julian, thereupon, opened it himself; but, as he took out the vial, he could not forbear remarking that a strong perfume came from it, which, however, seemed exhilarating and pleasant rather than the reverse, as Cyril had described it.

"Upon my word," exclaimed the Count, "your demon-draught is nothing but wine of Cyprus. I can scent it from here."

"So can I," said the major-domo; "if the flask really belonged to one of the Fathers of the desert, I must say he had good taste. Your

Excellency might tell me if I am right. The King of Naples once drank Falernian dug up from Pompeii. Why should not the Count taste wine of the year 300?"

"Will you open it?" said his master, handing him the flask. Julian looked on with a dull curiosity, while the major-domo, applying a pocket corkscrew which he drew forth, pulled out the ancient stopple. As he did so, a light blue flame leaped out of the vial, and was gone in a moment.

The Count put his lips to the flask, and drank a few drops. "Rare Cyprian, as I told you," said he, inviting the major-domo to follow his example; "there's no doubt St. Anthony kept a good cellar, or at least his visitor did."

"You look pale and worn, good brother," continued the distinguished pilgrim, turning to Julian; "doubtless the result of long austerities. Why not refresh yourself with a draught of this fine old liquor? It would put new life into you."

But Julian kept his eyes fixed on the ground. He would have said to the strangers, had he dared, "You are committing sacrilege with a light heart;" and so he felt as he watched their proceedings. It was a relief when he could take the flask again from the major-domo, and lock it away in the chest. As he did so, it appeared to

him that the silver vessel was full up to the brim, in spite of the long draught which the Count's attendant had laughingly taken. But he would not trust his fancy now; its vagaries had cost him too dear already.

V.

THE ELIXIR OF DEATH.

Hardly were these pilgrims departed, when a change, as from deep midnight to the hour of dawn, took place within Julian. He felt convinced that the aroma floating round him when the flask was opened, and penetrating his senses, had in some way given him fresh strength. Not a trace did he perceive of the malign influence which Brother Cyril had ascribed to St. Anthony's flask. "After all, perhaps the major-domo was right," he said to himself, "and we have been libelling good Cyprian wine as though it were brewed at the infernal fires. Why should not the Saint have devised this striking allegory to edify and warn his brethren? Surely, that was the explanation I felt disposed to give from the first time I heard the story; and was

I not actually giving it, on the fatal day when I broke down?"

The thought pursued him, especially on occasions which soon returned, that made him feel his estrangement from the rest of the community. An attack of fever laid him low, and he could no longer attend the services in the monastery chapel. The nights which he spent tossing on his pillow seemed endless. Would it not be preferable to set his life on a cast, if thereby a chance of recovering his health were given him? So, in a kind of fever-dream he argued; until, at length, rising from his hard couch, he went down stealthily, in the dark hours after midnight, resolved to open the sacred chest, take out the vial, and drain its contents.

Now, as he passed along the corridor, the gleam of a distant light came into his eyes. It was the lamp which burned day and night before Our Lady's image, hanging by a silver chain from its staple. Julian, trembling but resolute, took it in his right hand, opened a side door, and went, with haste and furtive looks around, the whole length of the church, towards the relic chamber. In the dim and flickering light, he seemed to catch a glimpse of figures starting from the pictures on the walls, or suddenly flaming down upon him out of the stained

windows, at which the moon peeped in through clouds. If ever a man followed the Via Dolorosa, the truly Sorrowful Way, of sin and superstition, it was Julian on that dismal night. He dreaded his own shadow; nor would he have felt so much surprise as horror and shame, if the dead had arisen from their graves to bar his retreat to the cell, which now appeared in his fancy to be hundreds of leagues behind him.

Still, he would not turn back. Through a broken pane in the choir came sighing fitfully a breath of air, which might have been his poor mother's voice warning her son not to rush upon the unknown. A fearful stillness reigned, like some secret and unhallowed power, in the treasury, where Julian now was standing. But he set his lamp down, pulled open the doors of the cabinet, seized the fatal flask, and drank in haste and desperation, like a man pursued.

What was the sudden change that came over him?

Life, ah yes, life in a glowing tide surely it was, that he now felt coursing through his veins. A genial warmth filled him from head to foot, its waves enlarged his very heart, and their electric touch seemed to burn his lips and his tongue. With a drunken exultation, he put back the now empty case, thrust the flask into the bosom

of his habit, and hurried away. Just as he was restoring the Madonna's lamp to its place, it fell to the ground with a noise of broken glass, and was shivered into pieces.

Julian did not heed the accident. In a few minutes, he was again in his narrow cell;—but how changed from the being who had left it! The room seemed too small for him. Air, light, space to walk to and fro, he must have, that he might rejoice in this new creation, this palingenesis, this higher and vaster stage of existence that he had reached. All the house was plunged in sleep, and throwing a cloak about him, the friar went boldly down to the great doors, threw them asunder with noise enough to wake his brethren,—but their slumber that night was hardly natural,—and paced the garden walks, backwards and forwards, until the dappled light was showing in the east.

His whole existence now lay before him as a childish delusion, a foolish masquerade which this power of illumination vouchsafed to him had stripped of its disguise. New feelings that revealed a universe were welling up within. He had wings and could fly into the air, eyes that pierced the essences of nature, a haughty conviction of his sovereign greatness which, he was assured, no mere mortal could withstand.

All at once, in the midst of these proud imaginings, a strange circumstance made him pause. How came he to open the locked cabinet without the key? Why, the key was lying among his papers; he had never touched it since the hour when Cyril gave it him long ago. And yet, on occasion of the Count's visit, the same thing had happened as to-night. In the faint gleam of the morning, he examined the bunch of keys which he always carried with him. There was a tiny unknown key hanging on the ring!

He ran upstairs and opened his desk. Almost immediately, a second key of similar size and make fell out from his manuscripts. Julian's blood turned cold. He put both keys and the flask in a secret place at the bottom of the desk; and now, sobered from his first boundless ecstasy, went to the monastery doors and shut them. The house was still plunged in its magic sleep.

The colour which came back to his cheeks, the fire in his eye, the reckless and defiant tone in which he answered his brethren's greeting, made a marked impression that day. His fever had seemingly left no trace; and he moved and spoke with such abounding energy, that Leonardus, meeting him in the garden, said in a significant whisper, "Has Father Julian recovered his health through a vision of the night?" The

young man, however, did not wince. He looked at his superior with calm disdain, and resumed the walk which he had for a moment interrupted. Leonardus heaved a sigh, as he went into the church to pray for him. There was something in Julian's character from a child, undecipherable even to his experience. And now, it was coming out like a disease—was it insanity, or had he mistaken his vocation?

Perhaps the latter. Thanks to that wonder-working draught, Julian felt an intense and irrevocable distaste for the daily round of devotion and study which had long been his happiness. The cloister shut him in as though a prison; its interests he judged to be mean and small. Out into the world he must go, where the multitude wrought, suffered, and made trial of good and evil. He would attempt preaching again—they should not hinder him. The next Sunday saw him in his accustomed place; but declaiming from the pulpit with a flow and vehemence which left his former rhetoric the pale shadow of that wherein he now excelled.

He alone, however, knew that ere he ascended the steps, he had tasted of the wine which made him eloquent. Soon the crowds came again to listen and admire. Julian was in more request than ever. He spoke of religion as a subtle, all-

pervading, triumphant force which the world could not resist when the right men handled it; and his language, borrowed from the physics then in vogue, seemed to announce a new school, perhaps an outburst of mysticism. Even those who neither believed, nor intended to believe, came from curiosity to hear the Franciscan talking science in the pulpit. And for the most part they were charmed; but as one of them remarked when he was driving home with a friend of Father Guardian's, "This young Julian thinks he is changing science into religion, as the Bible says water was turned into wine at the marriage-feast of Cana. He had better take care that his wine doesn't turn to water. He treats religion as if it were vital force."

True, and Julian began to feel that he was not delivering the message that his Catholic audience expected from him. He was mad to get behind the machinery of life, and control it. All his religion was rapidly becoming an attempt to gain secret knowledge, or else a sensuous ecstasy, abounding in the delights of sentiment. Leonardus, more than ever disquieted, spoke to him with great severity, and then, seeing he did not profit, kept a silence towards him which was the most cutting rebuke; while Julian, in his turn, repaid the silence of his oldest friend with usury.

As will often happen, when two people who are thoroughly unsympathetic live under the same roof, and must meet every day at table or in the common-room, the young friar did literally hate the sight of Father Guardian. His calm eyes and white hair, his cheek furrowed with the anxieties of a life, which, by no choice of his own, had been a long campaign against enemies he had not raised up,—these personal touches, once so dear to Julian, stung him into a positive frenzy. The hours spent away from St. Wolfgang's he counted so much gain, and to return thither was like going into captivity.

There was one other friend of Julian's, whom the contradictory and alarming reports which she heard of his conduct would not suffer to rest,—the Benedictine Abbess, Ermyntrude. She saw him now very seldom, for he preferred the society which Lindenstadt brought round him, and though always well behaved and even affectionate when he came to pay her a visit, he evidently had ceased to take pleasure in things monastic. By way of satisfying her mind, the Abbess begged him to preach in their chapel on the feast of St. Benedict.

As usual now whenever Julian was announced, a great multitude came to the service. He made no preparation, chatted and laughed up till the

last moment, looked round with a smile at his audience, and broke out into an amazing flood of words, in which the Father of Monasticism appeared with all the magnificence and pomp of a great secular genius, who, by sheer force of will, had subdued earth and heaven to his designs. Julian's rhetoric was overpowering to such a degree, that more than once a murmur of applause which would not be restrained, went round the assembly. Ermyntrude sat in her stall listening, and was cut to the heart. When Julian had finished, he came down, buried his face in his hands, and never changed his attitude until the church was empty. Then he joined the abbess in the parlour, awaiting the eulogy which, if eloquence were its own end, was certainly his due. But no sooner had he entered, than she prayed him to excuse her leaving him. A few minutes afterwards, his mother, who now lived in the precincts of the Abbey, and had heard him, poor woman, with unfeigned delight, brought him a note from Ermyntrude. He tore it open, and read as follows:—

"It is true, then, my dear child,—for I will call you so still,—as friends have told me, that instead of preaching Jesus Christ, you preach yourself. I never would have believed it. What, the chair of doctrine is to be your stage, your

theatre, on which you may display the false glitter of worldly principles, and make void the cross of Christ! For shame, Julian! Is the path of lights which our great Patriarch ascended on his way to Heaven, and of which you drew so grand a picture, nothing else than ambition directed by a rare intellect? And you tell Christians, nay, religious bound by vow, these falsehoods from the altar! I am grieved, I am distressed beyond measure for you. Julian, I entreat you, cast out the evil spirit. Fast and pray and be silent. *Fuge, tace, quiesce*; you know that life-giving maxim. But never, until your mind is changed and you have learned to edify, not to dazzle and perplex, the little ones of the Lord, set your foot again in this sanctuary. I pray St. Benedict to forgive you the outrage you have done to him, and mercifully to guide you upon the true path of light.

"ERMYNTRUDE, Abbess."

Julian felt as if struck by lightning, when he read these words. Hiding them from his mother, and throwing out a dubious hint that business called him away, he took a last farewell of her, while the choking which he felt in his throat made his words indistinct and his voice husky. "Leonardus!" he said to himself as he hurried

along, "it is that envious and prejudiced bigot who has been slandering me to the Abbess. I will not endure it. The world is wide, and I am still young. If needs must, I will tear off this brown robe, I will leave the order, get myself a benefice, and spite them all by winning name and fame while they are vegetating in their monks' garden. But first, I will come to a plain understanding with Leonardus. The formal pedant! As if originality in preaching were a sin against the faith!"

And so he ran on, the zeal of his own vanity devouring him. But when he arrived, Father Guardian had set out on a journey. He was compelled to subdue his rage, and to spend a sleepless night as once before, in the garden of which he had spoken so disparagingly.

Next morning Leonardus returned. Julian saw him, and felt the blood mount to his forehead; but how astonished he was when one of the lay-brothers brought him a message, that Father Guardian wished to speak with him as soon as possible! When he reached the Father's room, Leonardus, in a tone of much kindness, said to him, "I have been thinking, Julian, that we have not, perhaps, dealt so considerately with a man oı your talents and temper, as it behoved us to do. Young birds should not always stay in

the nest. They must learn to fly; and if your superiors have delayed giving you larger freedom, believe me, it has been from affection and not from envy or neglect. However, you shall now make the trial, unless you have anything to say against it."

The friar's heart leaped and his eyes sparkled, but by no other sign did he betray the delight with which he seemed to hear the gates of the monastery opening. His friend waited, but he was still obstinately silent.

"Ah, my dear boy," said Leonardus sadly, "I know not what has come between us, but you no longer confide in me. Be it so, since it cannot be altered. See here, your commission to go to Rome."

"To Rome?" exclaimed Julian; "on what errand?"

"As procurator for St. Wolfgang's in a matter of extreme consequence, the details of which are in these papers. I ought to go myself, but the journey would be too much for me, at my time of life. You will stay in the houses of our order on the road, and never with lay-people, except in case of urgent necessity. To-morrow morning, at break of day, you set out. Spend the time that is left in earnest prayer, as I will also; and God grant, Julian, you may return to us safe

and sound, to the glory of St. Francis and the good of your own soul."

Tears stood in the old man's eyes; and a sudden rush of tenderness made Julian, forgetting his recent anger, lift to his lips the hand which, as a child, had so often caressed him.

Yet, even while these early recollections were once more putting forth their kindly influence, the young man could not help suspecting that Leonardus had seen into his thoughts, and was anxious that he should leave the cloister without scandal. Perhaps, by some means, the theft of the magic vial had come to his knowledge. Julian felt himself a prey to enemies, seen and unseen, who were making him their sport. His former sense of self-possession had yielded place to a sentiment he could neither banish nor properly explain,—another stream of desires, sensations, and longings, he would have said, was flowing impetuously over his real self, which lay helpless and almost in a swoon beneath these dark waters. But to lament, to resist, availed not. He must go forward, or rather let himself be driven along.

Still, as Leonardus counselled, he spent the night in prayer. The thought occurred to him that he was bound to restore the goblin flask; but he took the Cyprian wine (if such it was) for

his journey, and put back only the empty vessel in the cabinet of relics.

At dawn, the brothers assembled to bid him God-speed. Leonardus embraced him in silence. The doors of the monastery opened, showing in clear light the prospect over the valley; and, as they shut again behind him, Julian felt as if his chains had suddenly snapped asunder, and he was beginning life in real earnest.

VI.

ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS.

Down the vale went our friar, the high hills which lay in front seeming to draw him onward, as the morning sunshine brought out their glorious shapes from the mist. Behind him lay St. Wolfgang's, to which he sometimes gave a backward glance, not regretfully, but as though to mark how far it was away in the past already. Through stretches of wood he wandered on; by farmsteads, where the peasants were busy and cheerful, greeting him when he came in sight; up and down with the winding road, and over

the fields of early spring, which were in some places emerald-like with the green blades just risen above their surface. And, ever as he went, the sweet morning air blew upon his forehead; the birds were chirping and singing merrily in the boughs overhead; on the grass lay ten thousand sparkling jewels, that flashed, and gleamed, and hid themselves again in the shape of innocent dew. And the sun rode majestically up the sky and swept it clear of every trace of cloud, until it became one immense blue dome, transparent ether, which deepened into fathomless depths.

"Oh, how pleasant to be out on such a morning, alive, and one's own master, travelling whither one lists!" exclaimed Julian. "I could walk for ever beneath that crystal roof, which is like a window into space, into eternity!"

His feelings were no longer the same as at Gottesruhe. The visions and fevers of the night, from which he had suffered, might still be lurking within the cloister walls; but he began to own their foolishness, to take the part of Leonardus against himself, and to recover something of the inward health which had been his until vanity led him astray. This wholesome temper lasted as that day and the next wore on, while his pilgrimage (for in the light of such a holy

undertaking Julian now considered the journey) lay through a land of fresh green woods, well-watered meadows, and rustic plenty. But the paths all went up, gradually becoming steeper and more rugged. Rocks thrust themselves out of the heather; pines and larches took the place of oaks; the air was chilly; and great streamers of mist floated from the mountain sides, which came out like walls and terraces of hard stone, that the traveller must scale if he would go onward.

Yet towards mid-day the heat sometimes became overpowering. And thus it happened that Julian, finding himself in a desolate region, far from any village, and unable to discover the tiniest stream or brook at which to quench the thirst that many hours' climbing had excited, sat down on a fragment of rock, and pulling out his flask, drank without compunction. He no longer believed in the ghostly origin of the liquor, and laughed at the simplicity of which he had once been the victim.

Nevertheless, he rose up mightily refreshed. A thick fir-wood covered the hillside, and Julian resolved to push through it, as being evidently the shortest way to the monastery at which he was that night to lodge. As he stumbled on in the failing light,—for it grew dark and dim

beneath the covert,—he heard somewhere at hand the neighing of a horse. Quite near him, indeed; for a step or two brought him in sight of a magnificent black charger, tied to a tree. And, heavens! he started back with an exclamation of affright. In front of him, less than a yard in advance, he beheld the opening of a deep and precipitous ravine, on the very brink of which there sat, in a sleeping attitude, a young man, his sword and pocket-book, as well as his plumed head-gear, on the ground beside him. But the fearful thing was to see this slumbering figure, its head bent over the abyss, and the body seeming to tremble, as though next moment it must tumble in. With a loud cry, Julian rushed forward.

"Awake, awake," he shouted, and put out his hand to save the sleeper. But the instant he touched him, the unhappy youth, stretching his arms wide, and turning on the friar a dazed look, lost his balance completely, and fell headlong into the gulf beneath.

Julian heard him fall. The sound of a heavy thud on invisible rocks in the abyss came like death upon his ear. He fancied even that out of the ravine there floated up to him a faint shriek, which must have been the last utterance of that unfortunate whom his touch had sent to

so terrible a doom. Scarcely knowing what he did, the friar took up the articles which lay on the ground. Overcome with horror, nay, with remorse for his own act, excusable though it might appear, he was hurrying from the spot, when a second young man, in hunting costume, broke through the covert, and barred his movements. But after looking Julian steadily in the face, he burst out laughing inordinately. The friar was appalled.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Count," said the huntsman when he could recover from his fit of merriment, "but the change of dress was so quickly done, and your disguise is perfect! Lady Gunhilde will require an introduction when your Reverend Countship enters her presence. But how have you disposed of the uniform?"

"I threw it over the precipice," Julian answered, in a hollow voice which he did not recognize for his own. Neither was it he that replied, as he thought to himself. He turned and looked fixedly into the deep ravine, almost expecting to see the blood-stained corpse of the Count—such, then, was the young man's rank—rise up from its darkness.

"Well, your lordship," pursued the other, "I had better take your sword and hat, ride round outside the hamlet, and put up, as you told me,

at the house which is nearest to the western gate of the Park. Every night I am to be in the wood, as was agreed on, with Rütli. And Sir Count, dressed out as a friar, will present himself at the Castle."

The Franciscan, terrified, but obeying the voice within, did not utter a syllable. He handed the Count's sword and hat to his servant, who disappeared into the wild wood as he had come, singing and whistling. In a few minutes he had untied the horse, and patting him on the neck, and calling to him coaxingly, "Rütli, Rütli," away he went on his business, whatever it was.

"I am caught in a trap," said Julian, when he was alone. "Great God, what has happened? Did I not fancy, even as I touched the sleeping Count, that he resembled the face and figure I have seen in my looking-glass? It must be so. The man has taken me for his dead master,—his murdered master, shall I say? This disguise means some adventure—a love affair, I suppose—on which he had set out. Shall I go up to the Castle? Leonardus forbade me to enter a layman's house, without necessity. But are not this young man's fate and mine clearly interwoven? I will run the risk, and see this strange business through."

Having thus determined, he sat down again,

though at some distance from the fatal ravine, and undid the Count's pocket-book. There were notes in it to a large amount, as well as other documents of which, in his distracted state, Julian could make little sense, but no name or indication of the owner.

"It matters not," repeated the voice which was so foreign to him within, "take your chance, and see what comes of it." He marked a by-path which led away from the precipice, and following it as if it were a living guide, soon came over the brow of the hill, and lo, a stately castle in the vale at his feet! With the courage of an explorer, he made his way through the hedge, entered a great park, and found himself close to one of the side-walks or embowered alleys, in which two men, both in the dress of nobles, were pacing up and down. Their voices came distinctly to the spot where Julian, on seeing them, had paused inside the hedge. One, who appeared to be the elder, was saying :—

"You know my views, Reinhold. An only child like Gunhilde, the heiress to this ancient house and lineage, has duties, in marrying, to her father's name. How could I rest quiet in my grave, with a foolish young spendthrift,—and Siegfried von den Mohren will never learn wisdom, I am sure of it,—wasting these broad

lands on his so-called pleasures? *You* are the son-in-law that suits me. And Gunhilde must let me choose what will be for her happiness."

"I would not press the matter, otherwise," said, in persuasive tones, the man called Reinhold. "To tell the honest truth, Von den Mohren never was a friend of mine, and now, as rivals, we should probably slash one another across the face if we met."

"Tush, tush, there is no chance of your meeting," replied his companion; "Siegfried may be dead and gone, for aught I know. It is a good twelvemonth since I turned him from the door of Schloss Rabenstein; and nobody seems to have heard of him since. Quite time Gunhilde gave up thinking of the dissolute young roysterer!"

"Unluckily, she thinks of him more than ever," said Reinhold, in a musing voice, as he looked on the ground before him. They had now stopped in their walk, and Julian strained his hearing to catch the older man's reply. It came after an interval.

"If you want to put all the nonsense to flight that girls call romance and their feelings," said Gunhilde's father, "the shortest way is to marry them to a man they can respect,—and, if necessary, fear. It shall be settled, my dear Reinhold, before you leave Rabenstein. The betrothal shall take place within the next seven days."

They turned again, and Julian, relying still upon the impulse that was guiding him, leaped out boldly on the path, and went up to them. As the master of Rabenstein caught sight of the friar's gown, he smiled and nodded, and quickening his own steps, called out, "Good morning, Father." But when they were all close together, he added with joyous surprise, "Is it really Father Julian of Gottesruhe? I am delighted. Landgrave," turning to his friend, "let me present to you Father Julian, the famous preacher."

Our friar was a little taken aback at this unexpected greeting. But Reinhold, who had lifted his eyes carelessly to see their monkish visitor, put on a look of blank amazement.

"Are *you* Father Julian?" he asked almost rudely.

Julian bowed. He could not trust himself, as yet, to speak. But Rabenstein, taking him familiarly by the shoulder, replied in his behalf: "There can be no doubt about that, I am happy to say. When I was staying in Lindenstadt, a year ago, I had the pleasure of hearing Father Julian preach,—more than once, indeed. For who would refuse himself such a gratification while it was in his power?"

"You flatter me," said Julian, divided between

feelings of vanity and apprehension. What was coming next, he wondered.

"And how comes the Father to be travelling from home?" enquired Reinhold, eyeing him by no means pleasantly.

Again, his friend came to the rescue. "Gunhilde mentioned to me," said Rabenstein, "that she wished to consult a skilful director, and that she should like to see one of the Franciscans here. But I hardly gave her credit for so much sense as to single out Father Julian. Lay down the law clearly to her, my good Father! Let her understand her duty, I beseech you."

"I certainly will," returned Julian, upon whom light was breaking every moment. Siegfried, then, the rejected of her father, and this man's rival, was to have been introduced into Rabenstein as her ghostly counsellor. There was a plot going forward, to which the young Count's untimely death had given an extraordinary turn. How should Julian play his part?

"Come and see my daughter, she is within," said Rabenstein, interrupting his confused thoughts. "But I have not told you the name of my distinguished guest, the Landgrave of Meissen, to whom Lady Gunhilde will shortly be engaged." The two men bowed, and each returned the steady glance of the other. From

that instant, explain it who will, they were enemies. Julian said in his own mind, "Will she be engaged to him, then? We shall see. I am in Siegfried's place, and it shall be as I choose, not as this overbearing and insolent suitor chooses."

The Lady Gunhilde they found seated in a chair of state, close to the window in the hall or chief living room of the Castle, from which there was a beautiful shaded prospect into the Park. She seemed almost too fair, with her clear complexion and limpid, though not very expressive, blue eyes. She was reading, with her back to the window, and did not observe their approach until they were quite in the room.

"Here is your Franciscan at last, Gunhilde," said her father, in the light vein which he thought suitable to girls and children. The lady sprang to her feet, on hearing the words, and Julian was not astonished when she flushed scarlet from brow to chin. She caught hold of the chair to steady herself, and said with most unmistakable effort, "You are welcome,—Father."

"But why did you make such a secret of our visitor's name?" said Count Rabenstein; "I suppose you wanted to give us all a surprise, when you invited Father Julian to leave his

preaching, and attend on the whims of a girl of eighteen."

"Father Julian!" exclaimed Gunhilde almost in a shriek, as she scanned the new-comer's face eagerly, "oh, my God!" And she fell from the daïs headlong upon the floor of the hall.

The confusion and alarm may be imagined, which were the consequence of this unexpected scene. While the Count, calling loudly for help, ran to the various doors like one distracted, Reinhold, with flaming eyes and a vehemence of tone which betrayed the deepest emotion,—but rage, and not anxiety for the woman he was about to make his wife,—turned sharply upon Julian, and said, "Can you tell me what all this means, sir? Are you the cause of Lady Gunhilde's fainting?"

With remarkable self-possession, Julian answered: "Let us see to the lady first, if you please. When she is recovered, no doubt she will reply to your questions."

And he took a carafe of water from the table, Reinhold looking on sulkily, and held it to her lips.

Gunhilde came to herself in a few moments, and her first words, as she sat up and gazed around, were a request for Father Julian, who had stepped discreetly aside.

"You frightened me, Father," she said, in calm and well-poised accents, rising to her feet with the help of her maid, and seating herself in the great canopied chair again. "I have not been well lately. But there is no occasion for alarm," she continued, glancing towards Reinhold and the Count, where they stood apart. "Do you mind my speaking to this good Franciscan at once?"

"I am at your disposal, gracious lady," said Julian, bowing low. The others left them.

But hardly was the door shut, when Gunhilde, trembling visibly from head to foot, said in a deep whisper: "How came you here? Have you a message from—from—?" she could not articulate another word. Julian pitied her.

"From Siegfried?" he murmured in the same undertone. "Alas, alas! I have come,—" pausing, uncertain how to tell the sad story—"in his place," he concluded, the sentence falling from his lips like a message rehearsed.

"He sent you! you have seen him? Why did he not come himself, according to our agreement?"

"Here is a token of his," said Julian, showing her the port-folio. She took it eagerly, ran through the contents, and gave it back with a sigh. "Nothing for me," she ejaculated, "but

surely you have seen the Count. What am I to do? In a few days this detestable ceremony will take place, unless I am rescued; and then—good-bye, Siegfried! Oh, Father, can you not help me?"

"I can," answered Julian, drawing himself up as at a word of command; "only trust me implicitly."

"I am ready to trust anyone who reminds me, as you do, of Siegfried von den Mohren. How come you to be so alike? The resemblance, when you entered, was too much for me. At first I thought you were Siegfried; and then, something, I don't know what, told me it was a deception, a mere accident. Is it so?"

"Who knows?" returned the friar impatiently, "and what does it matter? We will turn the resemblance to good account." He dared not inform her now that the young man was lying dead at the bottom of the ravine, less than half a mile from Schloss Rabenstein. Yet why should she be forced to marry the Landgrave whom she hated?

"What is your plan?" she next inquired of him; "you are aware that Siegfried was to have carried me off from the Castle as soon as he possibly could, after getting in here disguised as a monk? But here is the Landgrave, urgent,

suspicious, and tyrannical. What can you do, I ask again."

Said Julian, in the most straight-forward of tones, keeping his eye fixed upon her while he spoke: "Do, Lady Gunhilde? I can kill him."

She fell back in the chair with astonishment. "Murder our guest, even though he is the Landgrave?" she said in a horrified voice; "Father Julian, what are you saying?"

"What I mean," he returned; "but do not call it murder. Only give me the assurance with your own lips that under no circumstances would you become the Landgrave's bride."

"Oh, sooner than that, I would die a hundred times," she made answer. "I was as good as promised to Siegfried ever since we were children. Can I help it if he has not been so steady as he might have been? This Landgrave with his false tongue, and his cold, cunning, ugly face, I loathe from my heart." She clenched her hands together, and the tears dropped on them while she was speaking.

"Well, then, you shall never marry him; I will take care of that," reiterated Julian.

"And will you help me to reach Siegfried wherever he is? to see him? *Shall* I see him soon?"

"Let us not talk any more just now," said

the friar evasively; "the Count is coming back. When can we meet again?"

"Not until to-morrow," Gunhilde answered; "to-night, of course, at dinner; but there will be no opportunity of speaking in private. I have many things to ask you. Here, at this time to-morrow, we will meet again."

VII.

THE GLIMPSES OF THE MOON.

The friar, caught up in this net of intrigue and adventure, was glad to be alone. He did not know himself since the morning. A whole world of mischances, secrets, and fatalities, now lay between him and the convent life from which he had broken away so exultingly. Father Julian, the preacher, the mystic, was the slayer of Count Siegfried! He was the champion of the Lady whose lover he had helped over the precipice,—unwittingly, indeed,—but how would she take the revelation which the same destiny that had decreed the catastrophe might also bring about? Moreover, did not the Landgrave suspect that Julian was only the mask and *nom de guerre* of Count von den Mohren? Had not his wary

yet inflamed looks that meaning? And this double character, this ambiguous Franciscan, was not his word given to Gunhilde that the Landgrave should perish? It was a fearful entanglement. The unhappy man would have prayed for guidance if he durst. But even this delay in a secular house, when he should have been lodging at the nearest monastery, made any petitions he might put up to Heaven seem insulting and vain.

"Oh, Julian, no longer a son of St. Francis," he groaned aloud in the chamber where Count von Rabenstein had left him, "what will become of you? Truly, it is a devil's drink that you have swallowed down, and now it is setting you on fire."

Yet, from another point of view, he thought himself excused, if not wholly justified. In his natural disposition there had always been a touch of the chivalrous; and he could not bear to see innocence borne down, when he was near enough to interpose. Here was a father sacrificing his daughter's hand and heart to the most selfish considerations, and a human being so unmanly as to force himself upon a maiden, who showed by every means in her power that she detested him. Although not imprisoned, as in the good old mediæval days she would have been, deep in

some oubliette or windowless dungeon, Gunhilde was still a captive, and he would be a brave knight who should rescue her. But then, the dead lover, and the meeting with him which his own silence must seem to have promised? The future was, indeed, a dark enigma.

Accustomed, however, to the stern self-control of the cloister, Julian met the lady and the two men at dinner, putting on the mask he had so long worn, of a simple yet not unlearned religious. Gunhilde treated him with a singular mixture of fear and kindliness, sometimes not venturing to look his way,—as though the painful reminiscences called up by his likeness to Siegfried still haunted her,—and yet occasionally appealing to him from the overwrought flatteries of the Landgrave, who professed to rely altogether on her judgment. The old man, her father, was at once a help to the conversation, and a peril to their secret understanding. Always friendly with the order of St. Francis, he told stories of the friars he had known during his travels about the world, especially in Palestine and other parts of the East. And he plied Julian with questions, to which, as the latter observed, Reinhold was listening attentively, as though they might concern himself.

It would have been easy for the Franciscan to

enlarge on points so familiar to him as his daily life, the old stories passing from one generation to another, and the legendary names in which his convent of Gottesruhe took pride. None but a genuine friar could have displayed the knowledge that came to him as a matter of course. But the plan which was now fermenting within him, led Julian, not only to feign ignorance in these characteristic details, but even to stumble on a smooth road.

Count von Rabenstein was what the French might call a lay-sacristan. He delighed in ritual, church festivals, and the minute particulars of the sanctuary, points on which Julian, seeming reluctant to answer at all, manifested a surprising dulness and stupidity. And Reinhold, grasping the arm of his chair with suppressed passion, and leaning forward in an eager and almost fierce attitude, looked from the friar to the Count, and from the Count to the friar, and threw an enquiring glance from time to time at Gunhilde, who sat there, distraught, as it would appear, and motionless.

At length, when Julian returned a peculiarly inept answer to the Count's questioning, Reinhold, with a visible sneer, observed, "I suppose your Reverence has been too busy fighting, to stay behind with the baggage-waggons? One

would say you had hardly seen the inside of Gottesruhe."

"I am always prepared to meet the enemy," returned Julian, looking him straight in the face; "anywhere, Landgrave; do you mark me?—anywhere!"

"But not at Rabenstein," said the Count laughing, "I see, Father, you belong to the Church militant. Do you carry a sword?"

"When the occasion serves," answered his monastic guest. It was an odd reply, but seemed only to amuse the old man. Reinhold, however, rose abruptly and left the room. His steps could be heard on the moonlit terrace outside, hasty and irregular, as he moved up and down in the agitation of thoughts which he could neither dismiss nor bring to a practical issue.

It was a fine night, and under pretext of taking a stroll before saying his breviary, Julian contrived to slip away into the Park. Reinhold still paced along the terrace, but stopped when he saw the friar's shadow falling across it, and made as though he were going into the house. Ere he could reach the door, our friend was by his side.

"I think, Sir Landgrave," he said with formal politeness, "you meant to insult me in the dining-room?"

The Landgrave stared at him with eyes of amazement. "Insult you?" he repeated after a slight pause; "it is impossible to insult a friar."

"Or to strike a sovereign prince," retorted Julian, giving him, at the same time, a sharp blow on the cheek, which even in the light of the moon, turned from pale to scarlet.

"Siegfried von den Mohren," exclaimed the Landgrave, drawing his dagger; "you shall pay for this outrage. Draw, villain, instantly, or I will stab you to the heart."

He advanced upon the friar with infuriate steps. But Julian, firm as a rock, stood where he had fallen a little back after delivering the blow, and merely putting up his hand, said to the other, "Show yourself a gentleman, sir. Have you no regard for your host? We will fight, but in a more secluded place."

"Come into the glen," said Reinhold savagely; "were you the friar you profess to be, I would have you whipped from the Castle gates. But I knew as soon as I set eyes on you, that you were no friar."

"The weapons?" inquired his supposed rival, in the tone of indifference he had taken all along. Julian was unacquainted with sword-play, or fencing, in any form; yet the spirit which now

buoyed him up gave him secret assurance that he might trust himself to the chances of the hour.

"I have a couple of rapiers in my sleeping-chamber," said Reinhold. "Go forward down the path to your left, and I will follow."

"What does he mean by the glen?" thought Julian to himself, as he turned into the path indicated. "Can it be that dreadful ravine where the real Siegfried met his doom this morning?" He shuddered more at the possibility of this coincidence, which clouded and distressed his imagination, than at the peril now coming upon him. To bear the part of one who was lying close to them, dead and stark, had the air of profanation, of a gross and horrible sacrilege. Yet was he not now pledged to it? Could he reveal his identity and escape? The resemblance which had made Gunhilde swoon, and had deceived the sharp eyes of her lover, must be no common one. "Did I ever hear the name of this Siegfried?" the friar went on musing, as he pursued the zigzag path which led on to the glen, "never that I can recall. But which is the turning now? I am at the meeting of two cross ways."

He heard steps behind him, and looking back saw the Landgrave hastening forward, with the rapiers under his arm. Julian waited, and the

pair walked on together, in absolute silence, their eyes bent on the ground, and each thinking that this might be his last journey in the moonlight.

But the friar's mental balance was fearfully shaken, when he perceived that his anticipations had told him true, and that they were entering the ravine, now for ever linked in his thoughts with the vanished Siegfried. A gloom, as thick as midnight, overspread the sides on which tall trees grew together; but the clearing on the edge of the precipice, though narrow and winding, was lit up by a full moon. In the stillness of the night, they could hear a sort of shrill and piercing whistle from time to time; it was a screech owl on the wing.

When they came out into the open space, under the moon, Reinhold threw down his bundle on the grass, and said, without looking at Julian, "Choose your weapon." The friar put out his hand like a blind man, and took the first that came. Then seeing the Landgrave strip off his embroidered coat, he began to unfasten his habit.

As he did so, his hand touched something that he wore, and had worn for many a year, round his neck, from the day when he first beheld the mysterious violet-cloaked figure and the heavenly

child. It was the crucifix attached to its golden chain. Immediately, a flood of recollections rushed over him; the waking dream in which he lived and moved broke into mist that fled before the wind. What, he, Julian, had been so deluded by the Tempter! He was about to perpetrate a hideous crime, and commit murder or suicide! Impossible, it must not be. Rather leave Gunhilde to her fate than stain his hands with blood!

"Sir Landgrave," he said in a voice that was scarcely audible, "you are the victim of a deception. You take me to be Siegfried von den Mohren, and I am not he."

"Enough of this fooling," roared rather than spoke Reinhold; "by Heaven, I will cut you down where you stand, if you do not defend yourself. You *are* Siegfried, and you shall never leave this spot with your life."

He was already upon the friar, and their swords clashed, when—the moon suddenly passing behind a bank of cloud and emerging again—in the fresh light, Julian, whose face was towards the ravine, saw to his horror a form leaping out of the brushwood, and flinging itself between him and Reinhold. "Merciful God," he exclaimed, letting his rapier fall, "it is the dead man, it is Siegfried, Siegfried!"

"Yes, it is Siegfried, Siegfried," mimicked the new-comer in hollow and unearthly tones, as he snatched the weapon to himself. "Reinhold, well met at last." And with a sudden onslaught he made for the Landgrave, whose arm was palsied in astonishment, as he gazed in terror and confusion from one to the other. They were fearfully and wonderfully alike, though Julian wore the Franciscan habit, and this second apparition, sprung from the unseen in a moment, was dressed in a torn uniform, the breast of which, and his ghastly moon-struck face as well, was disfigured with clotted blood.

But the Landgrave, while taking all this in at a glance, had no time for reflection. His spectral assailant, managing the rapier with a skill to which passion, or some strength more than human gave terrible force, drove him backward towards the precipice. Evidently, it was his intention to thrust the unhappy man over the brink. They fought desperately; and Julian, recovering from the paralysis which had seized him on the vision of this fetch or wraith of himself, was rushing forward to stop the combat, when Reinhold's foot slipped and he fell on the point of his adversary's sword. A stream of blood burst out, the Landgrave seemed to bound up into the air as if a spring had been loosened

within him; and the gaunt form of his murderer, casting away its sword, disappeared as suddenly as it had come upon the scene, into the darkness of the surrounding woods.

Not a moment elapsed from the time of his vanishing, ere a woman, in disordered dress, came running up the pathway and rushed into the clearing. "What has brought you here, Father?" cried Gunhilde, panting with excitement and the rapidity of the pace at which she had come. "I knew there was mischief on foot. Oh what is this?" as the body of the Landgrave met her view, where it lay stretched on the rank grass. "Is he dead,—killed by your hand, Father? *You* killed him?"

"Siegfried killed him," answered Julian, kneeling by the prostrate Reinhold, and feeling his heart. He would have given worlds to find the faintest pulse beating there, but he knew that his hope was vain. The blood continued to pour out, wetting the grass, while it was yet warm with life.

"Your lover came and killed him," said the friar gloomily; "did you not see the apparition?" He felt that there was a ghostly presence still about them, and all his courage and resolution had melted away.

"But take me tc him," cried the girl; "take

me to Siegfried. Where is he? Why do you talk of apparitions?"

"He is dead, like Reinhold," was the strange answer; "the blood on his uniform had scarcely dried; but I saw him rise out of the depths into which my hand pushed him. Oh, surely, Siegfried is the murderer, not I."

"The murderer, and *you*, Father Julian, confess that you pushed my Siegfried down the abyss! Where, when? Are you beside yourself?" She was turning, in her distraction, from the dead body to the friar, to and fro, in an access of real frenzy.

"Search for him there," said he, pointing with outstretched finger to the dark ravine, "search; it is true that I was the cause, the innocent unwitting cause, of his death. Search, but you shall never see my face more."

With these frantic words, he turned into the pathway by which he had come on that fatal errand, and ran headlong, he knew not whither, through the brushwood, across open spaces beneath the trees, by sunken fences, a huge impalpable fear dogging his heels and driving him before it. He was all eagerness to escape from the chaos in his own mind. But he dreamt that the moon fled along with him, and that never, never, should he reach the safety of

the dark. As he went with lightning speed beneath the branches of some tall overhanging tree, he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and a voice cried in his ear, "Sir Count, whither away so fast?"

"Who are you?" he questioned with a gasp.

"Why, your lordship," replied the other, coming forward, "don't you recognize your trusty page, Stanislaus? I have brought the horses with me; they are tethered just outside the Park. But is the lady coming? Has our plan succeeded?"

"Silence, silence," was all that Julian could say. The saucy young page, feeling rebuked, went on without answering, and the monk, still oppressed with the awful vision of what he was leaving behind, made no further attempt to shape his own destiny. They passed through a gap in the hedge, at a short distance from which two horses were standing.

"I have strapped your lordship's things together," said Stanislaus; "Rütli is carrying them, as I suppose you will travel alone."

Julian pointed along the high road in silence, indicating wearily that the attendant had better take himself off as soon as possible. Sounds of alarm were already breaking on the night air from the direction of the Castle.

"But the Lady Gunhilde?" insisted Stanislaus, "must we abandon her, sir? What, in Heaven's name, is taking place?"

"Away," said his supposed master, stamping on the ground. Every moment he expected to see the servants of Rabenstein issuing from the Park to lay hold of him. The alarm increased, and Stanislaus, leaping to his saddle, rode off without looking back. It was fully time.

When he had quite disappeared, Julian, taking the big black horse by the bridle, led him as noiselessly as he could, into the forest which extended for miles along the country side. There was still an hour or more of moonlight, which he feared was likely to betray him to the pursuers. But these had gallopped off in an opposite direction, and the forest was as silent as death. He tied up the steed again, and lingered by the poor dumb beast, each glad of the other's society, until morning. He was sick at heart, and weighed down by an unspeakable terror.

With the first beams, he opened the pack which contained Siegfried's preparation for the adventure he was never to carry out. A rich, but quiet costume, such as nobles then wore in travelling, a good round sum in gold, and a dressing-case, fell into his hands. The die was cast. Julian in a few minutes had arrayed

himself in these secular garments, and taking out the flask of liqueur, or whatsoever it might be, with the portfolio which he had seized yesterday, from the pockets of his Franciscan robe, he bestowed the brown habit in a hollow tree, covering it carefully with leaves. Thus he was no longer the disciple and liegeman of Gottesruhe; but,—"Ah," he could not refrain from saying aloud, bitterly, "now am I a nameless vagabond, a thief, and a liar, as well as a would-be murderer. Go on, thou that wast Father Julian; meet thy fate." A cold sweat had broken out on his forehead. But hurrying to a brook hard by, he knelt down, bathed his face and his hands, arranged his hair under the three-cornered hat, and then, waving his hand as if to exorcise the remembrance of the past, he flung himself on Rütli's back, and rode out of his hiding-place. It was some time before he could venture to ask the way, but seeing the smoke of a town or village at a considerable distance, he made for it by guess-work.

And now a strange, if not incredible alteration took place in him. I will relate it in his own words.

"From this time forth," he says, "the aspect of Nature became to me like one continual enchantment, or rather, a witch and Satan's world.

Secret whispering voices muttered, or murmured, or threateningly cried at me out of the trees, the bushes, the flowers; every creature I met, however small or insignificant, took on a shape I was constrained to remark, and seemed to have a message for me. The very insects, buzzing in my ear, spoke of misfortune and crime, warning me to turn and flee this way or that. When I met people on the road, although their speech sounded outwardly quite simple, I detected in it undertones, and often words slipped in, of mysterious import, which, nevertheless, I took to myself, and was able, when I thought over them, to comprehend. Things without form or life spoke to my spiritual senses. An arrangement of the clouds, a sudden brightness in the sky overhead, the stones by the wayside, were full of signs and tokens. All at this stage warned me, implored me, commanded me to go back. I held on my way, nevertheless, and came in the early forenoon to the village I had been keeping in sight for several hours."

VIII.

THE MOUSE AND THE NET.

The warning voices unheeded, Julian, passing up the narrow High Street of the village, dismounted, amid a throng of idlers,—to whom his appearance, wild and weary after the night's troubles, was a signal for comments by no means favourable,—at the door of a decent inn. Striving to look unconcerned, he called the host, bade him give Rütli his best attention, and asked for breakfast. The good Boniface had come bustling out, but when he saw a stranger whose garments seemed made for some one else, and whose restless furtive eyes glanced about on all sides in a paroxysm of fear, he stepped indoors again without answering, and brought out thence a taller man than himself, wearing three golden stars on his coat-collar, who was evidently an official of some kind. This personage marched up to Julian with much gravity, and measured him with his eye from top to toe.

"Well," said the traveller fiercely, returning his stare, "do you belong to the hostelry? see to my horse, man."

The other, disconcerted and put out, answered in a gruff tone, "You shall soon know who I

am. Sir, you don't move from this place, until you have shown me your papers, and told me your name, your quality, and your business, where you come from, where you are going to, how you came by that fine animal, where you were born, and who can vouch for your character. I am the district judge, and I must be satisfied before you pass on."

The friar, though at a loss what to say, could not help being amused while this self-important person was speaking. What name should he give? He had no papers; and Siegfried's portfolio might lead to his immediate capture. But he must not seem to be daunted.

"If your Judgeship will allow me an interview in the inn-parlour," said Julian quietly, "I think I can satisfy you. But alone, observe. I warn you how you deal with a man of my rank."

"Has he any dangerous weapons, think you?" whispered the judge to Boniface. Mine host shook his head doubtfully; "I should not like to trust him," he said.

"Come now," interrupted the friar, "my time is precious," and lowering his tone, "satisfaction is waiting for you, judge," said he, carelessly displaying the purse which he had extracted from the bundle left with him by Stanislaus.

"I will risk it," muttered the village magistrate, overcome by the double temptation of gold and mystery. "Follow me, gracious sir," and he led the way into a dark parlour, the door of which he at once locked against Boniface, who would fain have made a third in their conference. "Now tell me everything, or expect the worst," said the judge majestically.

Julian smiled and looked him in the face. "I said you should have satisfaction, and so you shall," he answered, laying down on the table ten golden rix dollars; "here are reasons for keeping my name and the rest of it to myself. Good reasons, don't you think?"

The judge counted, weighed the pieces in his hand, turned round, and slipped them in his pocket. "Oh yes," he said, laughing, but looking rather ashamed, "genuine reasons, good, very good, so far as they go; but they will take you only to the end of the village, where the prison tower stands."

"By Heaven, then," said Julian, seizing him by the throat as he spoke, "you shall go there too, and be dealt with as a witch. The money is enchanted, it has the devil's mark on it. I was with him last night in the firwood."

The miserable judge fell on his knees. "Oh sir," he whimpered, as well as the choking em-

brace of the friar would suffer him, "let me go, let me go. Take your money, your accursed money, and depart. I will have nothing to do with it." Julian released him, whereupon he took the coins hastily out of his pocket, and threw them on the table as if their touch would burn him. Gravely putting them back in his purse, the victorious friar strode to the door, flung it open, and walked out. His horse was standing in the street where he had left him, and the crowd still pressed about the entrance. But when they saw the stranger come out, followed by their magistrate looking deadly pale, and his knees knocking together, with one accord they fled in all directions.

Mounting instantly, the young man, whose heart was still in a flutter, though his eyes ran over with the thought of the trick he had played on the judge, galloped like the wind along the village street, the dogs rushing at his horse's heels. And so he came to the gate; but on arriving there, Rütli, who had been hitherto obedient, stopped still, drew back, bounded hither and thither, as if suddenly seized with madness, and became quite unmanageable. An old woman, bent with age, sat crouching by the gate. As she beheld the steed plunging and terrified, she pointed towards him with her crooked finger,

and cried in a thin cracked voice: "He sees his master's blood on the ground, his master's blood! He will never go through the arch while the scent rises into his nostrils. Why doesn't the next of kin give me a silver penny? Give, stranger, give: then I will banish the blood, and you can go free."

"What do you see, Lise?" exclaimed the women, running out of their cottages. "Tell us, tell us."

"I see the dead man," she replied; "he is lying across the gateway in his blood. A silver penny is the tax; pay the wehrgeld, stranger, pay it to old Lise, and she will smooth your path."

In a great rage, and with difficulty keeping his seat on the terrified horse, Julian threw her the money, which the old hag devoutly kissed, as if it were a relic. Singularly enough, on her speaking to Rütli in some unknown language,—if it were not the gibberish of the insane,—the poor animal grew quiet, and went out through the arch without making any further objection. As he rode away, the friar observed at a distance the village magistrate talking eagerly to the peasants in the High Street, who had gathered about him again, and who seemed to be in a state of growing excitement. "I must put

many miles between them and me ere the night comes on," said Julian, full of fear lest they should sound a general alarm. He had eaten nothing since yesterday; but now, remembering the wine-flask, he drank what remained of its contents, and riding madly on, but often changing his course, he went at such a terrible speed that Rütli, unable to hold out longer, staggered on the roadside and fell. Then with one pathetic look at his unknown master, he closed his eyes, and died.

Many things had filled Julian's soul with horror and affliction, but the sight of the overdriven horse, and his almost human expression of sadness, moved him even to tears. For a long while, he sat by the dead body, so miserable, that he would have given himself up to prison and judgment, had the officers of justice come by. At length he rose, and, walking some way on, joined a crowd that, after spending the day in devotion and revelry at a famous shrine in the neighbourhood, were now returning to the city. The gates stood open; no questions were asked by the sleepy watchmen; and the friar, making good use of the money that he carried, was shown to one of the best apartments at the Golden Lion. He told the waiter that he should breakfast in his

room next morning, and should want the hair-dresser.

"That will be Hans Flitter, your Lordship," said the young man, smiling.

His sleep was undisturbed, and he breakfasted with a good appetite, his memory the while running over all that had come to pass with such bewildering rapidity. He saw that he must take a name, put on a dress corresponding to his station, and find out whether news of the strange events at Schloss Rabenstein had travelled to Moldau,—the large manufacturing town in which he was now staying.

A knock at the door startled him from these reflections. And who should come in but the queerest, most comical, odd, mis-shapen figure of a little man? He had a hump on his back, and his eyes were of different colours, one brown and one green. He wore a thin cotton jacket striped like that of a harlequin; and altogether he seemed to be a living, gesticulating scarecrow, with a towel in one hand, and a comb and a pair of scissors in the other. A breath would have blown away this mere fragment and ghost of a human being.

"What, are you Hans Flitter?" said Julian laughing, "come to dress my hair and beard?"

"Hans Flitter? no such thing," replied the

apparition in a voice which was high and cracked; "my name is Belcampo; Pietro Belcampo, at your service, gracious sir. You will want your beard shaved off, and a wig put on, curled, powdered, all in the latest fashion, or people will take you for a monk,"—coming near, as he spoke, and glancing slily into Julian's face. "I should say you were one, myself, gracious sir, but your eyes are too bright."

"Say nothing but what you are bidden," returned Julian gravely; "can you bring me the wig you speak of? One suitable to my years and standing?"

"Oh, sir, in a moment; I keep all sorts." Hans or Pietro, whichever was his name, ran out as quickly as he had come in, and did not reappear for the next half-hour. Then he brought with him a tall companion, as serious as himself was volatile. "This is my friend the artist in clothes, Herr Baron," he said breathlessly, "I knew you would want him. When Gustav Adolph has decided how to attire you, I will choose your top-furniture in the same stylé. Gustav Adolph never speaks; he is one of your silent mathematicians, always busy with lines, angles, and dimensions. I, Belcampo, speak for both, Herr Baron."

"So it appears," said Julian, anything but

comfortable under the eyes of the silent "artist in clothes." "But hark you, sir," to Hans Flitter, "I gave you no leave to call me Baron. I am Herr Conrad, a travelling student, with some property of my own, and not a care in the world. I wish to dress in the manner becoming a person of middle station, so as to excite neither envy nor ridicule. Can you accomplish this, Master Tailor?"

"Not he alone; but we together," said Pietro. "Gustav, out with your measures, and turn the Herr Conrad,—who is not a baron, mark you,—into a mere middle-class student. I meanwhile am devising his cast of hair."

Between them, certainly, the talkative and the silent artist contrived, while Belcampo's brainless chatter did not cease for one instant, to effect a transformation which surprised Julian. He was altogether a new man. When he went down in the evening to the common dinner, it helped him amazingly to see that his next neighbour did not so much as look up at him; and he joined, though at first only by monosyllables, in the conversation which was going on. Next day, he ventured to walk about in the streets of Moldau. There too, the success of his masquerade gave him assurance. But as he was turning down a by-street, up came Hans Flitter,

smiling and ducking, and rubbing his hands with evident satisfaction. "Where's the monk now, gracious sir?" he whispered, "dead and gone, vanished, annihilated, not a trace of him left except when you put your hands so, as if you were hiding them in your wide sleeves! Don't do that, gracious sir, if you can help it. They are looking everywhere just now for a monk who has committed murder,—two murders,—and suppose they thought it was Herr Conrad! What a pity it would be!"

"Come here, you insane Belcampo," said Julian, drawing him into the shadow of a carriage way; "tell me what you mean, or I will shake the life out of you," holding him with a violent grip.

"Don't, Herr Conrad, you will break my bones, and I liked you the minute I saw your bright eyes," returned the thin little humpback, pretending to whimper, while a real tear ran down his cheek. "It is all true, and if you go back to the Golden Lion, they will ask to see your tonsure. This monk they talk of was mad, not in the least like you, but the law makes no difference."

"Well, what did he do?" asked the other, feigning a calmness which he was far enough from feeling. "Where did he commit these murders?"

"Oh, at Schloss Rabenstein, miles and miles away."

"Do they know his name?"

"It was Father Julian, the famous preacher. Some think he went out of his mind last year, when he was giving a grand sermon about St. Anthony and the devil. No wonder, if he preached on the devil! But anyhow, the police are in search of him. This frantic brother,—ah, please don't hurt me, Sir Conrad!—What did he do? He killed his Lordship Count Siegfried von den Mohren, and left his fine military uniform in the firwood, where it was found—"

"And the Count's body in the ravine, did they find it too?"

"What ravine? I never said anything about a ravine. No, Sir Conrad, they found only the empty clothes. The body was spirited away. And so, the murderer went on, as bold as you please, to Rabenstein, and there he frightened the Lady Gunhilde into hysterics, enticed the reigning Landgrave of Meissen to a lonely glen, and pierced him through the heart with a spear the demon gave him. Oh, a fine brother!"

"The Landgrave—who did you say? Is *he* dead as well?"

"Died instanter, had no time to send for a priest, much less a surgeon! The Lady Gunhilde

is out of her mind; the castle in an uproar; servants scouring the country round; and they say poor Count Siegfried's horse,—Siegfried von den Mohren, you know,—was seen carrying a wild man through some of the villages, and afterwards was found dead in a ditch."

"Ah, poor Rütli!" said Julian with a sigh. Belcampo looked at him uneasily. "If you were the monk, the murderer, Sir Conrad," he said in a troubled childish fashion, "I should not like to be with you. But your eyes tell me that you are too kind to be a murderer. How unlucky you should have come to the Golden Lion last night!"

"What can I do now?" was Julian's perplexing thought. "Put on a bold appearance and brave it out? The officers must be now in the city. Or escape while there is time? This idiotic barber will be sure to follow me."

As he stood thinking, his observation was arrested by a figure which seemed to be watching him across the lane. It was an irregular mediæval street, the houses of which projected almost until they met on the first storey. "My God, it is the cloaked stranger again!" cried Julian, darting across the road, in the hope of seizing him. But he ran violently against the wall; there was no one there.

"Gracious Sir," exclaimed Belcampo, running after him, "wait, wait. I have a counsel to give you. Hear me, and do as you like." He took hold of Julian's sleeve, beseechingly, and continued, "I have a friend at one of the gates who will shut his eyes and say nothing, if I ask him. To-morrow I was setting out on my travels,"—with an air of deep significance,—"but to-day will do as well, or even better. The prognostics are favourable, the stars propitious. Come along with me, and we will visit in company the court of the most illustrious and most artistic Duke Ferdinand of Lusatia, with whom I have business."

He spoke in his usual mixture of crazy and high-flown language, and was certainly not sane; but, on the other hand, Julian felt that to venture back to the Golden Lion would be running his neck into a deadly noose. The only alternative seemed to be Hans Flitter's suggestion. "Come at once," he said, pulling the friar along; "think how unpleasant it would be if they took you for Father Julian. You would surely be broken on the wheel."

It was enough to make even desperate expedients appear feasible. Accordingly, they set out, keeping in the lanes and by-ways, until they reached the Nepomuk-Thor. A sentry challen-

ged them in forbidding tones, but when he saw Belcampo, he became friendly, patted him on the shoulder, and asked no questions. It was with an immense sigh of relief that Julian heard the bolts drawn behind him, and, but for his companion's wariness, which contrasted oddly with his incoherent and rambling speech, the friar would have started running as soon as he found himself on the high road. However, they walked on slowly for a mile or two, until the absence of houses, and the desolate look of the country, assured them that for the present they were safe.

IX.

A KING OF SHREDS AND PATCHES.

"Ever see Duke Ferdinand?" Belcampo began in his light-headed way. "No? I am surprised at that. The Duke is a great traveller, like myself. You wouldn't believe, now, that I have been all over the Holy Roman Empire of Germany? know it like my glove, could turn it inside out, and outside in again, so to speak! However, that is not the only resemblance between me and

Duke Ferdinand. We are both artists, both men of genius. He has the means, all his subjects work to keep him going; and I have only my small talent of dressing hair and making suitable wigs. Yours, Herr Conrad, is an admirable style,—grave, yet not too solemn; learned yet interesting; between two ages, but not old. Well, the Duke and I are sworn brothers in art. He would be a hair-dresser, were he not a sovereign prince. And I should build castles, theatres, coliseums, if I had subjects who would pay for them. But our great passion or delight, our darling sin, is music. Oh, there we agree as if we had but one pair of ears!"

"And those long ones," said Julian laughing, "but how come you to be so intimate with the Duke of Lusatia? I thought he lived almost entirely alone."

"True, Sir Conrad, yet a coiffeur, a builder of styles in hair, has the grand entries; he is welcome everywhere. And like draws like, the magnet loves every atom of iron; and Duke Ferdinand has an eye for hidden genius. When he heard my argument on the difference between nations that wear their own hair, and the less civilized that borrow from the dead and the living—start not, sir, the fault is in your circumstances, not in you, if such be your present case,

—then, I say, the Duke applauded, made me one of his household, and permanent coiffeur to his green-room. I go now to take part in preparing for the new opera."

All this had no very promising sound, but to be yoked with a strolling lunatic was the least of evils, compared with what might follow on their arriving at the Residenz. "Will they let you pass in your every-day attire?" said Julian, "and what pretext can I put forward, who am qualified neither to design a head-dress nor to figure on the stage?"

"No matter for that," returned Belcampo, "my official robes are awaiting me in a cottage outside the ducal palace, and we shall present ourselves to-morrow morning."

"But in what capacity am I to appear?" insisted the friar. "Duke Ferdinand will not receive a stranger who has no credentials."

"Tell him you have brought the philosopher's stone," said his crazy friend. "Did you never cook gold in a retort? You are no student else."

Belcampo's suggestion was not so mad as it seemed. Although Julian, troubled with the bee in his own bonnet, and given over to fancies which he could not master, had never felt much interest in the news of the day, the knowledge

could not have escaped him that this Ferdinand of Lusatia, whom he had never seen, was a ruler quite unlike most kings and princes. Everybody knew of him as an eccentric, moody, and spendthrift young man, enamoured of the fine arts, living by himself in palaces of fabulous beauty and grandeur, which he had built in spots almost inaccessible, and occasionally flashing by the frightened peasants at night, as if he were the wild huntsman himself, with outriders, torches, silvan horns, and all the magnificence of a royal chase. Those whom he admitted to his friendship were few, and must have some odd or mysterious quality to recommend them. A gold-cook he would be sure to receive with open arms. And once inside the palace, Julian might laugh to scorn the police that were on his trail. They would never dare to violate that sanctuary.

"It must be so," said the resolute friar in his own mind. "I will turn alchemist rather than be broken on the wheel. But hark you," aloud to Hans, who was observing him closely, "beware how you give out that I can produce the precious metals. The Duke alone is to be the recipient of so great a secret. Moreover, Belcampo, fool not your own self by attempting to pry beyond what is lawful. I may or may not be in possession of the Grand Arcanum; yet powers I have,

and will put forth, if need be, that shall blast you into dust and scatter your ashes on the wind. Mark what I say; I am not jesting."

Hans, a poor fanciful creature, whose innermost being was but a confused succession of Chinese shadows, felt indescribably terrified. He turned deadly pale, and answered all in a tremble, "Master,—Sir Student, or be your name what it will,—I knew from the first I must obey you. Something whispered to me that within you there was a dead man. I saw him glare through your eyes, as at a window."

"Remember it, then, and do what I bid," was the stern injunction. A thought struck Julian while he was speaking. Did the flask yet hold any drops of the magic wine? He examined it, and saw that, by careful management, he could dip the end of a quill pen in what was left. Doing so with great caution, he wrote in the liquor on a scrap of vellum which he tore out of his Breviary, "Conrad St. Anthony, Master of Gold." The vellum slightly hissed as though touched by some corrosive acid, and the letters he had written stood out boldly in a dark violet tint. Though startled himself, he kept down his fright, and said to Hans, "You will take that to the Duke, when we are ready, to-morrow morning, and say that the owner of the name craves an audience of his Highness."

"Oh, master, I have always wanted to meet you," exclaimed the insane Belcampo; "let me fall down and kiss the hem of your garment," putting it to his lips with intense devotion; "but I never dared call on your mighty and dreadful name."

"There, there; that is enough," said Julian, "be discreet and wary. To you as to all the world, I am Master Conrad: to the Duke I shall be such as he deserves to find me. Now let us take horses at the next village, if they are forthcoming, and do you hide away your striped jacket under some less noticeable garment."

When they arrived at the next town on their journey, the friar's plans were decided. His spirits rose, and he felt himself a match for any prince or potentate. Looking at the scrap of vellum again, he saw that its colour did not change; it keep the lurid and unwholesome tinge that was sure to attract, perhaps to terrify, the sensitive Duke. And now what was to be done? The weather was turning to rain and storm, and Julian augured unfavourably of their admission to the Residenz, and much more within the palace itself, if they came thither travel-stained and as mere pedestrians. He made up his mind to stay the night in this imperial city of Waldstetten, the gates of which they had

passed without challenge, and to set out thence in all the glory of postillions, outriders, and attendants, by means of the large sum of gold which he still carried on his person, and which had belonged to the dead Siegfried. Scruples troubled him no longer. The fright and submission of this poor shuttlecock, Hans, gave him an earnest of the success to which he confidently looked forward.

They put up at the first hostelry in the place, which happened to be the Seven Stars in the Hay-market,—and Julian, sending for the landlord, gave orders that his companion, whom he pretended to have saved out of the hands of highwaymen, although with the loss of everything which he himself possessed, should be properly attended to. For the third morning from that day, he desired that a travelling-coach, with the very finest horses to match it, and all necessary requisites, should be ready for him. And he must engage a confidential servant, whose qualities fitted him for the place left vacant by his own man, now murdered or a prisoner in the robbers' hands.

He drew forth a roll of gold, and gave it over to the landlord, who was obsequious and smiling in the presence of Prince Conrad, as he would persist in calling the great man. "'Master

Conrad,' my good host," said Julian gravely. But mine host knew the world. "Certainly, certainly, highborn sir," was his deferential reply, "you are travelling *incognito;* but I fancy your Lordship's features are not unknown to me. Rumour, indeed,—I daresay your Grace has heard,—lately announced that some accident, such as your Highness tells of, had befallen an illustrious personage whom I remember at this very inn of the Seven Stars, I dare be sworn more than a year ago. For I never forget faces I have once seen; it is my business, you will say, to remember them."

"As you please," returned Julian, with an ambiguous smile, "but I am not responsible for your memory, my excellent purveyor, and you must not address me either as Grace or Highness."

"Certainly not, highborn sir; you wish to keep up the *incognito.* I will observe it strictly."

All which notwithstanding, the landlord of the Seven Stars let it be known that a very great person was lodging with him; a man of noble presence and boundless wealth, who did not wish to be recognized. Julian, however, kept within doors, while Hans, with the deepest reverence, waited on him, trembling from time to time, and unusually silent. He took his meals in his

own chamber, and mapped out the chances and likely accidents of this new campaign.

In three days, the coach, horses, postillions, outriders,—all things were ready, including, as luck would have it, a body-servant, who turned out to be Stanislaus, the page of Count Siegfried. Coming into Waldstetten, in quest of news, and guided by the landlord's indiscreet babble, he had run at once to the Seven Stars, insisted on seeing Julian, and begged to go with him. The friar dared not refuse; but he feigned a grievous hoarseness which prevented him from speaking, and let Hans make the needful arrangements with Stanislaus. A large crowd assembled to see the Prince enter on his journey. They were disappointed, indeed, for, at the appointed time, a figure, cloaked from head to foot, stepped hastily out of the Seven Stars, flung itself into the carriage, and immediately drew down the blinds. The horses started off at a gallop, and Waldstetten was soon left behind in pouring rain.

At the gates of the ducal city, no opposition was made to Julian's entrance. His servants declared that their master was on a visit to the Sovereign, and would drive to the palace direct, —a proceeding which, while it greatly increased the curiosity of the multitude that surrounded his equipage, enabled him to dispense with

tiresome or even dangerous formalities. It was no new thing that persons of uncertain standing, without passports or other legal documents, should come to see the Duke. He received all whose credentials were the notoriety they had earned, by conduct which would have fitted them for the inside of a lunatic ward. And this high and mighty Prince?—perhaps he came from the Court of Russia, perhaps it was Cagliostro himself, whose ascertained presence in Strasburg, where he happened to be just then, did not hinder thousands from believing that he might also, at the same moment, be somewhere else. Julian had much in his favour, and his doubts and fears now gave place to splendid daring.

The comedy which he was to enact began with Hans, who, in a bright fantastic costume, making him resemble some ungainly butterfly that walked instead of using its wings, now dismounted from the carriage, and going straight to the High Chamberlain, announced himself as Belcampo, the ducal hair-dresser, and solemnly declared that he was the bearer of a message to his Electoral Highness. The Prince received him without delay, and he had been only a few minutes with Ferdinand, when the Chamberlain received orders to admit Master Conrad into the saloon where the Duke usually passed his mornings.

Julian was ushered in, not without a tingling anxiety, for all depended on the step he was now taking. He found himself in a chamber grotesquely fitted up, with stained-glass windows in the roof, from which angels or demons in red, green, violet, and saffron, seemed to be descending on the heads of all who came in. The walls were heavily draped in scarlet; and censers of frosted silver, standing out in bold relief against them, filled the air with perfume of a dense intoxicating smell. The Duke, who was erect in the middle of the floor, held Julian's card between his fingers, and gave him a long and melancholy stare as he came forward, bowing to the ground.

But when the friar, disguised in his travelling dress, looked up and their eyes met, the two men started violently. They had seen one another before.

"I know you," said the Duke, in a high-strung metallic voice, "you are welcome, Master St. Anthony; how should you not be welcome? But where have I beheld that face?"

"Your Highness can best inform me," said Julian, not moving a muscle. He had no difficulty in recalling the very day, and the circumstances, himself. Duke Ferdinand was the Graf von Winkelried, who had visited the monastery

when Julian kept watch over the relics, and, who with daring sacrilege, as the friar then believed, had insisted on drinking out of the magic flask!

Ferdinand of Lusatia, than whom a more unhappy Prince never reigned, was by nature an insane artist, whom destiny had seated upon a throne. The story of his life cannot be told here; but we may safely believe that he required no draught from any devil's elixir to derange his intellect, or to precipitate him into the current of a growing and overmastering madness. Still, he had tasted of that cup too much in Julian's presence; and what wonder if the fugitive from Gottesruhe ascribed to that irreverent action, the disorder which he now witnessed in the Duke's appearance and in his surroundings? Yet who could forbear a thrill of compassion, on seeing so complete a wreck of what had once promised so magnificently?

The Duke's passion for travelling without attendants, save whatever friend he had for the moment taken up, was accompanied with various strange delusions,—one of them being, that as long as he carried fern-seed in his pocket, he was sure to remain invisible; and another, that he could assume the form and features of the absent by strongly willing it. Thus he had visited St. Wolfgang's under the name of a

sober, stay-at-home nobleman, Von Winkelried, who would have been astonished and dismayed if Father Leonardus had ever told him that, on a pilgrimage thither, he had tasted of their carefully guarded philtre without anyone's leave. But Ferdinand was, in fact, the best known of German princes, or princelings. In face and figure he excelled them all. Standing over six feet in height, and of a graceful slender appearance, he must have been recognized by the most unobservant, with his beautiful clear-cut features, and his eyes of unspeakable melancholy.

He was now clad in a dark velvet gown, with cords of twisted gold around the waist; and he resembled much more a magician than a king. When Julian, whose short experience as a priest had initiated him into many secrets, looked stedfastly on this exquisite ideal of a man, he felt pierced to the quick. Ah, if he could be the physician to so noble a patient! But the opportunity was not given. So long as he called himself Master Conrad, the gold-cook, he would be merely heaping fuel on the fire of the Duke's insanity. For madness looked out of those large eyes, which were fixed in seeming observation, yet truly beheld nothing at all save the phantoms of a brain diseased.

Between two such men the contest was un-

equal. Master Anthony's weird name, inscribed on the vellum, had already worked like a charm upon Duke Ferdinand. Whatever was incredible, that he believed; and whoever promised to achieve the impossible, found in him a willing patron. He asked no questions regarding the antecedents of the Master of Gold; but when Julian, his confidence growing as he measured the Prince's weakness, prayed leave to set up his furnaces and continue the great transmuting process within the boundaries of Lusatia, the Duke eagerly besought him to take up his abode in the palace and thus give himself a share, at least as a spectator, in his high and glorious enterprise. Nothing could fall in more smoothly with the designs which the friar had sketched out. His carriage was sent to the ducal stables; Hans Flitter went off to the congenial department of the green-room; and a suite of apartments was set aside for Master Conrad, who now felt himself in a position to defy Leonardus, the Count of Rabenstein, and the avengers of blood that, in the name of the murdered Landgrave of Meissen, must be on his track.

X.

THE ALCHEMIST'S TRAGEDY.

It is said that a certain person, whose doings have occupied us not a little in this old-world story, takes care of his own. And he did now seem to have set his heart upon Julian, for during the next few months every sort of happiness fell to the friar's lot. In the palace, no power from outside could assail him. The ground might have swallowed him up, so far as his pursuers knew or had any means of guessing. And with the readiness of a born comedian—for even in the pulpit he had displayed more of that quality than of serious devotion, as we have seen,—the daring yet observant fugitive adapted himself to all companies. He was polite, genial, and attentive, but still kept an air of reserve that sat well upon him. The Duke alone, and the terrified Hans, knew of his pretentions to a knowledge of the Grand Arcanum. With others, he professed to be a student of chemistry, a dilettante, who had nothing else to do with his time, and who, like the illustrious Ferdinand, was devoted to music and the fine arts.

The greatest risk he ran was during the services in the Duke's chapel, which he could not

always escape; for there his monastic training might easily have led others to perceive that he must be familiar with the ceremonies of religion as a priest, and not simply as one of the faithful. But he affected an air of indifference, and talked and acted like a wealthy traveller, busily engaged, as the Latin proverb has it, in doing nothing.

All this required money, for it would never have served had the Master of Gold come asking, with the mien of any other petitioner, for an alms from the Duke's treasury. And money was not wanting. The crucibles, alembics, retorts, and whatever else his furnaces might demand, were bought; his servants were paid their salaries; their livery was kept smart; and large sums were given away to succour the distressed; yet Master Conrad found himself none the poorer. Did he really make gold then? Well, we may reply, yes, after a fashion; but not by discovering the philosopher's stone,—rather by trading on the folly of the foolish. An accident had revealed to him that he was lucky at cards. You smile, reader; and so did he, but his grounds were not the same as yours. He could count up the wealth in his purse; and what greater evidence of luck would you have than unbroken winnings, carried to a pitch that amazed everybody?

The Court was not at that season, as very often happened, a solitude in which servants who never opened their lips attended on a moody prince. On the contrary, it was thronged with those who had come to take part in the splendid theatrical entertainments for which the Residenz was famous. And play ran high every night. Julian, who had never touched a card, was prevailed upon to try his fortune. The game was faro,—I am telling the tale as it was told to me, and shall not venture to correct my historian,—and the High Chamberlain held the bank. Duke Ferdinand, who played with his usual enthusiasm, took charge of his friend's cards; and, much to Julian's chagrin, he lost every time. The ruin which stared him in the face, were all his money thus swept away, filled him with dread; and trembling all over, he said at last to Ferdinand, in a sharp tone: "Let me play for myself, your Electoral Highness." The Duke, displeased, arose and turned away to his other guests. But, to Julian's intense surprise, the luck had been waiting for that moment. He set five louis d'or on the king of diamonds; won them; staked the double; won again; and while the Court crowded round him to watch the course of the game, kept on winning until the table broke up, when he carried off to his rooms no less

than two thousand louis d'or, the fruits of this one night's work.

Immediately he was hailed as a Glückskind, or favourite of fortune, to whom the Duke himself, intimidated by this warning from the unseen, now yielded the greatest deference. Julian played once more, and his winnings, though not invariable, left him with a handsome sum. Henceforth, he might be constantly seen at the faro-table, mostly having the cards on his side, but once in a way losing, and that upon a plan which, though he could not unravel it, seemed to be in the guidance of a hand wherein chance became certainty. Go on he must; and he was willing to go on until the fortune of the table should change decisively. In the meantime, a portion of the gold thus acquired was, with infinite caution melted down, secreted in caskets of his own choice, with compartments he could shut or open at pleasure, and shown to the deluded Prince,—who himself took them out of the alchemist's fire,—as warranting Master Conrad's preternatural and unlimited claims. So long as the cards would provide golden ore, the deception was sure to continue. And for a not inconsiderable time, the cards smiled on Julian. At night he won the gold which, in the hours of early morning, straitly shut up and barred

against intruders, he melted for exhibition during the course of the day.

Yet, these invisible and malignant powers can never be trusted. One fatal evening, he was challenged to play when he would have greatly preferred to sit and look on at the game. He staked the large sum expected of the Glückskind, and lost, lost, lost, without intermission or one instant of retrieval, until all he possessed, down to the last of his golden coins, had gone into the hands of the banker. Why did he keep on playing? He could not say. In sheer desperation, most likely. But when at last, with scared and haggard features, he ran from the table to hide himself in his room, it struck him that nothing but a sudden fit of madness could have thus overborne his good sense. Without a continual supply of wealth, such as the state which he had taken upon himself demanded, the whole superstructure he had erected on the Duke's credulity must fall to the ground.

In this despairing condition he would see no one. By a written message, he gave out that he was ill; and the envious courtiers, delighted that one who was eclipsing them in the Duke's favour should fall as suddenly as he had risen, made merry over his misfortune. When he had been thus secluded for some thirty-eight hours,

during which time he did not touch a morsel, the voice of his poor follower, Hans, came pleading at his door, on the second afternoon. Rather than listen to the whimpering, as of a lost dog, he let him in.

"Oh master, great master," said the hunchback, clinging to his knees, "what has befallen you? Why so downcast? These chattering apes say that you are going to kill yourself, and leave Belcampo all alone. Idiots! They have seen your winnings at play and are full of spite. Is it true that you lost so much gold the night before last?"

"Everything," said Julian gloomily, "except —but there is no use in talking. Go, Hans, and leave me to myself." He pushed him away.

"But," said Hans, coming up to him mysteriously and whispering in his ear, "if you do not choose to make gold, I can tell you of some one who will give you good luck, a luck that never turns, on the cards. Let us go to Mother Hildegarde. She is an old, old friend of mine. She will teach you,—if you want teaching, great master,—how to win back all you have lost."

Utterly disheartened, Julian had felt the dark wings of suicide flapping over him. But now he was so beaten down, that even the courage of despair seemed to fail, and he cared not what

became of a life which had been allowed to drift with wind and tide from its moorings. "Who is Hildegarde?" he asked wearily, "some mad creature like yourself?"

Hans was not offended. "I am mad, if you like, master, but happy,—never more so than when my wits are wool-gathering. But no, Hildegarde is not mad. She is the wise woman who tells fortunes, recovers things lost, sees at a distance, and answers questions in her sleep. Come to her, do, at once; she will charm your luck to you again."

"I will not stir out of my room until dark," said Julian; "if you choose to take me then, I will go with you."

"Then I will stay here the while," returned Hans, seating himself on the floor, where he occupied his time apparently in counting the flowers in the carpet. Julian did not speak, and the minutes passed heavily. But when night looked in at the high window, he followed the hunchback, who was well acquainted with the ins and outs of the palace, and who led him to a door which admitted them into the Park.

What happened afterwards? He knew, but could not have told, all things melting, as in a dream, into one another. He was aware that Hans had taken him into a small cot-

tage, overgrown with creepers, somewhere on the edge of the spreading wood behind the Park; and by the light of one wretched candle he made out that a tall peasant woman, dressed in shabby garments, was advancing to meet them. Belcampo spoke to her, and she lighted a dismal lamp suspended on a beam overhead, which left her in deep shadow. Nothing could be more common-place than her features. She was neither young nor old, and appeared to be as robust and healthy as she was vulgar.

Seating herself on a heap of rags, so Julian took them to be, she directed her speech to him: "You want the luck back again, young man?" she said, with a masculine depth of intonation. "You are not the only one that has come to Mother Hildegarde on such a business. But how much can you pay?"

"Not a rix-dollar," said her visitor fiercely, "until I have won something. I am quite cleaned out, so I tell you. If you have the luck in your hands, that will make no difference."

"Oh, but it will," returned the dame, scowling; "I must be paid first. Have you no jewels, no chain?" She sprang up and took hold of his doublet. "I can see a chain round your neck," she exclaimed; "give me that, and I will do

what lies in my power to get the luck for you."

"Don't touch it, woman," cried the friar, drawing back hastily, with a groan. It seemed to him that all his innocent days were attached to the golden chain and crucifix which he had never left off wearing, in all his disorderly adventures. "Not that, I must not give it," he reiterated.

"You must and shall," she replied; "give me that chain, or you go back as you came. Give it, I say."

"Buy the luck, master, buy it, I implore you," cried Belcampo, joining in; "the chain will not save you from ruin, but Hildegarde is sure to save you. Is it not true, mother?"

"If he gives me the chain and what belongs to it," she returned cunningly, for she had caught a glimpse of the pendant cross.

"Take it, you hag!" cried the friar with passionate violence, "and may it hang round your neck and choke you!" He pulled it hastily over his head, and Julian holding the crucifix in his hand, like a child who is unwilling to give up something and closes his fingers upon it, saw the golden relic pass into Hildegarde's clutches.

At the same moment, he felt a dreadful pain, which ran down from the elbow of his right

hand, to the very tips of his fingers. He could have sworn it was fire. It made him utter a sharp cry, and his friend the hunchback turned round to see what was the matter with him. But the wise woman, sitting down again on the heap of rags, had begun to shuffle the cards, to cut them backwards and forwards, and to throw out certain of them on the ground. The other two watched her in silence. She was, for awhile, seemingly perplexed, taking up the cards again one by one, and scanning them with an air of the deepest absorption.

"*Who* are you?" at length she said uneasily; "I never had such a case before! The cards are double. You have another fate upon you. Let me look at your hand."

Julian held out the firm white hand which indicated strength and resolution, and the witch peered into it under the dismal lamp. "Oh, oh," she muttered as if fainting, "what is this? what have you brought me? Look, young man; look, Belcampo. Here is one I cannot oppose. Oh, look!"

The friar, gazing as he was bid, and Belcampo putting his head forward to see, they both observed, with a simultaneous cry of affright, that the palm of Julian's right hand was marked with a cross. A cross in deep red, the limbs of

equal length, and nearly half an inch broad throughout! Never, until that moment, had the friar noticed any mark of the kind. It was not there when he entered the cottage. He stood aghast, and could not speak.

"Oh, the cards told me true,—true, but how could I believe it?" moaned Hildegarde, gathering them up; "you most wretched, most fearful, accursed being! You monster in man's shape! Go hence, and meet the torture, the wheel, the murderer's grave! Cain, there is no refuge where you may hide! I hear the steps of the men that are seeking for you. They are coming nearer; you cannot flee from them. Nearer? Behold they are here!"

The door of the cottage burst open as she was yet speaking, and two officers, clad in the ducal uniform, flung themselves upon Julian, who made no attempt to resist. "What do you want with me?" he said faintly; "who has accused me?"

"You shall be told in due time," one of them answered; "we have orders to arrest the man calling himself Conrad St. Anthony."

Then Julian was aware that the order must have come from the Duke.

Meanwhile, Hildegarde and Belcampo had disappeared.

XII.

ACCUSING VOICES.

The friar was not taken back to the palace, as he had been hoping, but to some house not recognizable by him in the darkness. There, without examination, the police thrust him into a small, unlighted cell, and left him to his own reflections. He groped about, until his hands came in contact with the outlines of a bed, upon which he threw himself in his clothes; but he lay awake all night, expecting the day which was so slow to dawn. At an early hour next morning he was hurried before the judge. And now began a series of judicial investigations in private, from which he learned into what a peril he had fallen.

The judge, a civil and well-behaved man, (which was a rare thing in those days,) informed him that he, calling himself Master Conrad, or Conrad St. Anthony, according to the testimony of his Electoral Highness, was charged, by one Stanislaus Loudon, his own body-servant, with having robbed and murdered Siegfried, Count von den Mohren. And, furthermore, on this being made good, the accusation was enlarged by a second crime of which, whoever committed the

first, was beyond question guilty, viz., the wilful murder of Reinhold, Landgrave of Meissen, who had been stabbed to the heart in the same glen, or forest walk, where Von den Mohren had perished. "The author of these terrible crimes," concluded the official, "is known to be the Franciscan friar, Julian, who has been missing for some months from the convent of St. Wolfgang at Gottesruhe. And it is charged against you, Herr Conrad St. Anthony, that you are the fugitive Julian."

"A very pretty story, to be trumped up by a vagabond servant," said the friar; "what proofs does Stanislaus bring?"

"That, I am not allowed to tell you," returned the official; "but in two days from now you will be confronted with the witnesses, and had better in the meantime prepare your defence. Have you any papers showing your condition, antecedents, and reasons for coming into Lusatia?"

"My papers were taken from me by robbers, when I was on my way to Waldstetten," said the accused; "as for my life and antecedents, I am a foreigner, and I could neither prove my statements, being so far from my native land, nor disprove allegations made by Stanislaus and villains like him, against a student travelling in a quiet way to see the world."

"It is a pity you will not tell the judge anything which might enlighten him as to your past," said that functionary. "Do not think the charges against you depend on Stanislaus alone. There are independent witnesses."

This was a terrible blow. Yet Julian could say nothing which would not compromise him. His resolution was taken; he would keep his lips closed, come what might. But who were these "witnesses," in the plural? When the cell door had shut on him again, he ran over the possibilities of the matter, but was still at fault. The accusation coming from Stanislaus did not surprise him. All along, he had only a choice of evils. Not to have engaged him at Waldstetten would have amounted to leaving an enemy at large. In the Residenz, he saw as little as he possibly could of Siegfried's old servant. But the very want of confidence in him, doubtless unlike the Count's former treatment, must have led in some way to suspicion, and now at last to what seemed detection. Still, what witnesses could he bring? And by what chain of evidence was Master Conrad, the alchemist, to be identified with a runaway monk?

He must,—so ran the argument which he held with himself—let fortune get him out of the meshes she had woven round him as

hitherto she had always done. The Duke was clearly in a rage, or he would not have suffered his Gold-cook to lie in a common prison. What evidence had they, then, what evidence? That torturing fixed idea which must make the criminal's Inferno, was with him at all hours. He had no means of paying for better than the prison fare; he could not bribe the gaolers; and even Belcampo had run away from his discredited "master." "But nothing signifies now," said Julian to himself, drearily. Whatever thoughts he once had cherished beyond those of the mere animal desire for food and warmth, and to be safe from pursuit, were stagnant, and gave not the least sign of life. Here was a fine end to all his preaching! He had become a castaway.

The leaden hours! They moved off with stupefying slowness; but again his ordeal was come. Still in private, but in a regular Court now, and not in the official's room, Julian stood handcuffed, according to custom, before a bench of judges on the morning assigned.

The witnesses were to enter separately. And the first, who ran up to him with affectionate pity, which his stern glance rejected, was Brother Cyril. "Oh, Julian," he exclaimed in the well-remembered, rather childish voice, "to think of

seeing you again, in such a place! Why did you touch St. Anthony's Flask?"

"I do not know you, good Brother," returned Julian coldly; "keep your compassion till I ask for it."

"It is the elixir, the fatal draught, that has changed you," cried the poor old sacristan.

"You see, gentlemen, he does not recognize me," observed the prisoner, turning to the bench. The shot told; but Cyril, being sworn, declared his conviction that this was Father Julian, relating the legend of St. Anthony, and adding that when the hue and cry after their comrade was issued, they opened the flask, and found it empty. His own supposition was that the liquor had turned Julian's brain.

"Then if your friar was mad, he cannot have been responsible," again the prisoner argued. Cyril was no match for him, clearly; and the old sacristan drew aside, shaking his head with much sadness, when Father Leonardus was called. The venerable-looking Guardian, his hair silver-white and his face showing traces of weeping, now entered, walked up to Julian, and said, after a single glance: "My poor boy, my care, early and late! Confess your sin that you may be forgiven."

The dishonoured friar looked down and made

no reply. Internally, he was much shaken; and with difficulty did he refrain from throwing himself, hand-cuffed as he was, on Leonardus' breast. But to acknowledge the Guardian would have been fatal. He therefore turned his head aside, saying merely, "Is there no more evidence?"

Leonardus told his part in the events which led to Julian's quitting the monastery, and thus fixed his whereabouts at the time of the murders. But his supposed protégé bowed when he had finished, and would ask him nothing. The judges made a silent note against the prisoner.

Then came Stanislaus, who, in husky indignant tones, narrated the course of his suspicions from the day he entered Master Conrad's service, deeming, as he said, that it was his old master, because of the extraordinary likeness between them, and then baffled by the change in his behaviour. He would swear now that this was not the Count von den Mohren, whose uniform, stained with blood, had been discovered in the ravine near Schloss Rabenstein. But among Master Conrad's belongings, he, Stanislaus, had found the Count's portfolio, the money taken out of it, and papers of no consequence left. He produced, also, some of the Count's linen, which Conrad at some time or other had worn; and reiterated that he was now certain that the man whom he saw

issuing from the glen not many minutes after Graf von den Mohren had entered it, and whom he then imagined to be his master, was the very man now standing before them.

When he had finished giving evidence, a stir among the judges betokened that something unusual was about to happen. The usher of the court led in a lady in deep mourning, who, on being sworn, disclosed, to the terror of Julian, the features of the Lady Gunhilde. She gave him one piercing glance, and covered her face with her hands. "It is he, the treacherous friar," she exclaimed shuddering; "how dreadfully like he is to Siegfried! Wretch, where is my Siegfried? Did you not murder him?"

"Give your evidence calmly, so far as possible," said the presiding judge to the witness; "tell what you saw, and leave the rest to us."

"I saw this man," she answered, "this very man, and no other, standing above the dead body of the Landgrave of Meissen, after I had heard the sound of angry voices and the clash of swords."

"Was no one else there?" asked the judge.

"No one," she answered.

"Did the accused make any remarks?"

"He cried out to me," replied the Lady Gunhilde, in tones which marked the bitterest

contempt, "that Siegfried von den Mohren had killed the Landgrave. And oh, at the time he spoke, Siegfried was dead, slain by his hand! The uniform proves it."

"How did you dispose of the body, prisoner?" inquired one of the judges.

"I swear to God that I never touched this man's dead body," answered Julian in a loud voice. It was the truth, and that assurance made him fearless.

"His accent, his manner!" said Leonardus with agonized certainty. "If I had doubted till this moment, I must believe now. Good God, how terrible a story!"

The proceedings were long and involved, nor, by the custom of Lusatia, could the verdict be given on the same day as the trial was held. Julian, therefore, whose defence had convinced none of those present, and whose obstinate refusal to disclose so much as his real name or native country, added tenfold to the circumstantial evidence against him, and to the multiplied identification, was taken back to his cell between keepers, and there locked in. He knew that when the verdict was delivered, he should be at once handed over to the ecclesiastical authorities to undergo the awful ceremony of degradation. His privileges as a friar would then have ceased;

the secular officials would once more lay hands upon him; and already the vision filled his eyes and brain of the vast square outside, in which, as guilty of murder and treason against a sovereign prince, he should be broken on the wheel, and left to die in lingering agony.

A night of torture set in which not even his fervid imagination could have pictured. His whole life, from boyhood until now, threw itself into a series of flaming reliefs, so vivid, that the walls of the prison-cell were tapestried with them; and one by one he was forced to study their details, to turn the sweet and bitter alike into pain, to lament over the irrecoverable, and to dread the future which must answer to such a past.

Truly, the scales now fell from his eyes. What would he not have given,—but he had said it before, and worse had followed,—given, with all his heart, to live those days over again, in which by subtle gradations and steps descending by inches, he had changed from innocent to ambitious, from ambitious to rebellious, from rebellious to sensual, worldly, devilish,—for such he saw, with the clearness of eternity dawning upon him, to be his present condition, and such would it be for evermore? He sobbed bitterly, feeling himself a prodigal, an outcast,—and by his own foolish choice—from the house of his Father. "O to

live my life over, in penance, in silent submission,—to be the least among His servants!" he cried, "and it cannot, cannot be. I am sold under sin; torture is awaiting me, disgrace, death the most terrible,—and afterwards, what?"

He was still sobbing, when it seemed to him that the fiery visions no longer tapestried the cell, but instead of them, a cloud was softly wrapping him round. And in the midst of it, faint as grey within grey, yet brightening by degrees, he saw, with more overwhelming terror than all the visions hitherto, the figure so well known, with piercing eyes, hands folded on the breast, and the dark violet mantle hanging from the shoulders. With a shriek of despair, he fell to the ground, putting out his hands in helpless entreaty. "Away, away!" he cried, "am I not miserable enough? Come when I am on the wheel, if thou needs must gloat over the sufferings of mortal flesh, but not now. Hast thou no pity?"

He felt that the figure was drawing nigh. "Julian!" it said or seemed to say, "Julian!" The voice was more tender than he had ever heard. "Julian, I have great pity. But thou hast had little understanding. Am I so terrible now?"

"Not now," the friar murmured, when he

came a little to himself; "yet thou didst always strike fear into me."

"Would that the fear had availed to save thee," said the sighing, gentle voice; "even at this hour, it is not too late. Julian, pray as one for whom a trial by fire is reserved. Not such fire as thou deemest, but the fire into which a soul is cast, if peradventure it may yet escape. To-morrow, thou shalt be tried. See that thou prepare for it. A token,—thou deservest none, but this I have entreated might be given thee,—is here vouchsafed. Lift up thy foolish eyes which have fed upon vanities, and behold."

Julian did as the voice commanded him. And lo, the walls of the narrow room had drawn back, and he was standing in front of the altar of St. Rosalie in his convent church. And far off, in the dimness, he could just discern the violet-mantled figure; but close to him, touching his very hand, was the glorious Child, His features transparent as with light from Heaven, His sweet eyes fixed tenderly on Julian, and His lips ruddy and full, yet a little drawn, as he had seen them long ago, with the recollection, or the prophecy, of great anguish. But He was almost smiling,—the expression can be rendered by no human words: and it went to Julian's heart, and melted him in a flame of sorrow and compunction.

"Ah, sweet Child, pity me," was all he could say, while tears streamed down his cheeks. And the lovely sight was gone from him; and he lay on the floor, a broken man, repentant, ashamed, overcome,—but no longer the proud and haughty, the self-seeking, the deluded one, who was so utterly alone in his pride, and so helpless. The prison did not daunt him any more. He would go to his death now, humbly and even joyfully, to atone for the days he had spent in following his own will.

XIII.

THE CURTAIN RISES AND FALLS.

In what shape the trial was advancing upon him, which had been predicted by the voice of the invisible, Julian made no effort to imagine. He passed the hours of darkness in prayer,—such fervent and unselfish prayer as, since the days of his noviciate, he had never lifted up to Heaven. When the light broke, he greeted it with strange joy. The humiliation that was in store for him, though it might bend his spirit to the ground, he would take as martyrdom, or,—putting from

him a word to which he might not aspire,—still it should be sincere penance, coupled with a petition to God for mercy.

The clocks of the many churches struck the hours, and he listened and waited, but no one came to his cell. Would the day end as it began, without fulfilling the promise made to him?

No, two hours after midday, the door was thrown open. The gaolers entered, struck off the chain by which, in those ungentle days, prisoners were secured to the wall, and, with an emotion which betrayed itself in their hasty gestures, led him away to where the judges were sitting. As he passed into the open air, a grotesque and sobbing figure broke through the crowd.

"Oh master," said Belcampo, seizing his hands and kissing them, "take this back, you are without handcuffs now; you can put it round your neck and wear it." The friar saw that he was handing him the golden chain and cross. He put them on, much affected, while the gaolers seemed not to mind, as Hans Flitter, his countenance all in a glow, looked up admiringly at Julian, and smiled his half-vacant deprecating smile, in which there was perhaps more love than the fully reasonable have always displayed towards friends in misfortune. "I

took it when she was asleep," he added under his breath, with an evident allusion to Hildegarde; "but you know she did not bring back the luck you bargained for; so how could it belong to her?"

But they were entering the court, into which Hans, by his usual good fortune, was allowed to pass with the officials. What he saw there made Julian turn pale. In a chair of state sat Duke Ferdinand, looking eager and excited. Around him were many judges and officers of the palace; and all the space available did not suffice for the legal personages who were crowding upon one another in the doorways.

A sudden hush followed on the appearance of yesterday's prisoner, whose costume,—that in which he was arrested,—bore witness to his acquaintance with the highest circles, while his manner, now composed and serious but no longer defiant, excited—Julian would have said—admiration or pity, had it concerned anyone but himself. For he could hear the murmured words as he went slowly up to the tribunal. Once there, he kept his eyes on the ground, expecting the sentence which was to make so terrible an end of him.

"Conrad St. Anthony," the senior judge began, "there would have been no necessity in

the regular course to call you before the bench again." "None," thought the friar to himself, "I am not of their jurisdiction; they are going to hand me over to the Church authorities."

"But," continued the monotonous voice above him, "when a grievous error has been, though under circumstances the most extraordinary, committed by high officials, and innocence dealt with as if it were guilt, his Electoral Highness deems it just and proper that a public reparation should be made. You are no longer accused. The culprit has given himself up; and you are free."

Words, certainly, cannot describe the surprise of Julian, when this utterly amazing statement fell upon his ear.

"The culprit?" he repeated, directing his astonished looks towards the Duke, who beamed a gracious smile upon him.

"Moreover," the impassive judge went on, "the Court, in view of the whole case, acquits you of the charge of contempt to which undoubtedly you, Herr Conrad, have become amenable, in refusing to disclose the particulars of your station and history. By despatches from the most sacred quarters in Rome, we learn to-day that your quality and antecedents are perfectly well known to the supreme ecclesiastical authorities; and,

as a man of noble birth, you may be excused for the reticence, prompted no doubt by indignation, which led to your being confounded with a vile assassin. The Court cannot tender you an apology; but I am commissioned by his Electoral Highness to offer you, in his name, an expression of the profoundest sympathy and regret."

"But the culprit? the assassin?" stammered Julian, urged by feelings of which he could render little or no account. "May I be confronted with him, and this question of identity settled once for all? I beseech you, grant me my request."

"It is gravely informal," answered the judge, "but our proceedings to-day are quite irregular. The culprit is the Franciscan friar, Julian."

"What did you say?" exclaimed the other, "Julian? you are talking absurdities! What Julian?"

"The man who was accused from the beginning," said the official, much offended. "Do you presume to know better than the Court? The unhappy man, owning himself to be a Capuchin, and dressed in the habit of the order, in a robe which has worked into it his own name, has confessed that he killed the Landgrave of Meissen. What more do you require?"

"I require, in God's name," said Julian, dis-

tracted, "that you will bring me face to face with this man."

"We will do so," returned the judge; "and while the police are going for him, you shall read over the confession to which we have this morning listened, with the corroborative evidence. You may sit down, Herr Conrad. The Court has released you."

A secretary handed Julian the papers, which consisted of depositions formally signed by those who had made them, under the judges' eyes. The sum was as follows. Early that morning, certain Sisters of Pity, in whose hands lay the charge of insane and otherwise heavily afflicted persons, had sent for Brother Cyril to their house, and begged him to see one of their patients, brought in during the last week, and declared to be a Capuchin friar. He was not in his right senses, and was far from tractable; yet, as he continued, with the persistence of a fixed idea, to cry aloud that he had killed the Landgrave of Meissen, the Sisters, who, like everyone in the Residenz, had heard of the charge against Master Conrad, felt it their duty to call in the religious.

Cyril found the patient quiet. He was dressed in a brown habit, which was marked, as the Judge had said, with Julian's name; and the

sacristan, equally amazed and horror-stricken, recognized in his wild and wasted but still attractive face, the lineaments of their fugitive brother. He sent word to Leonardus, who came on the instant, heard the man reiterate his self-accusation, and, agreeing with Cyril that they had fallen into a dreadful mistake yesterday, immediately went to the public authorities, and begged them to search into the matter without loss of time.

The friar had been conveyed into court, and Providence so disposing of events, those by whom he had originally been taken to the hospital, were found and questioned. George Oberst, a forester in the woods near Waldstetten, and his son Fritz, gave evidence that the insane man, clothed in the habit which he was now wearing, had been discovered by their dogs in a copse, about three-quarters of a mile from their dwelling house. His condition was pitiable. He could not at first articulate, and he showed signs of the deepest exhaustion, as though suffering from want of food and exposure to the long rains which had then set in.

They took him home, and nursed him as well as their circumstances permitted,—for the forester's wife was dead, and their employment kept them busy in the woods all day. But he

came round gradually, and in what they affirmed to be a calm and sensible mood, gave them to understand that he was a Capuchin, who had left his monastery on important business. They asked his name. He stammered and said the fever had so broken him down that he did not remember it. On showing him the garment, however, which bore the name of Julian, he cried out eagerly, "Yes, yes, Julian, of course, Father Julian." Then relapsing into silence, he could not be induced to utter a syllable more.

But George Oberst went on to say, that a few days after this conversation, he mentioned in the friar's hearing that the Landgrave of Meissen, whose murder was the common talk, had been taken to his own city for burial. At the sound of the Landgrave's name, Brother Julian, rising up with a frantic gesture, had brandished his arms, exclaiming, "I killed him; it was I that stabbed him with my rapier." These words he kept on repeating all that night. "It was remarkable," said George, "that neither my son nor I thought of him as the runaway for whom search was making on every side; nor, perhaps," he added, raising his eyes proudly, "if we had so believed, should we have called in the gens d'armes to this poor suffering man." They did all they could for him; but his violence increased,

and last week they had been obliged to put him in their waggon and convey him to the hospital of the Sisters of Pity. Such was the woodman's story, which his son confirmed in every detail.

As for the new prisoner himself, he had answered the questions put to him with much composure. He was a Franciscan; he did not remember his name; and he gloried in having murdered the Landgrave. When asked what he knew of Siegfried von den Mohren, he smiled and looked round, saying he would keep that in his own breast. Siegfried was satisfied with him; they need not trouble about Siegfried; he would show himself at the proper time. And in this circle of ideas he persisted, only becoming irritable, and showing signs of incipient frenzy, as they pressed him with interrogations. He had, therefore, been removed again to the Hospital; and Master Conrad's release was determined upon.

Julian read this incredible document from beginning to end; but nowhere could he discover a clue to its meaning. He was still absorbed in it, when the people around him, as with one accord, rose to their feet, and he saw the officers carrying, rather than leading in, a Capuchin friar, whom they brought up to the platform, or raised daïs, in front of the Duke. The two

prisoners were now face to face; and one unanimous cry of astonishment rose from the assembly. For in height, in figure, and in countenance, they were exactly alike!

Their expression, indeed, was not the same. Julian,—the real Julian,—though he had suffered much during his imprisonment, and looked exceedingly pale, had something of the man of the world in his bearing, and the steady gaze with which he looked out over the court, was that of reason and resolution. The other, evidently insane, almost collapsed when left to himself, and glared round on his keepers with the timidity of a hunted beast. But when his eyes encountered those of Julian, he quailed and gave utterance to an inarticulate moan.

"Are you satisfied?" said the judge to our hero; "the Court has long been so; I will, however, put any questions to the prisoner which you may like to suggest."

But Julian was labouring under intense excitement. He saw the whole history at a glance, and now knew what that trial was of which last night he had been forewarned.

"Ask Father Leonardus and Brother Cyril," he said, "to come up hither,"—they were in the body of the court, "and send for Stanislaus; send for the Lady Gunhilde." He could hardly

speak above a whisper; his trouble was over-powering. But the sullen prisoner, crouching down within a couple of yards from where he stood, made no further movement, although his eyes seemed to be watching the man whom he resembled so fearfully.

When the two Franciscans were mounted on the daïs, Master Conrad, moving a little towards them, said with stifling tears: "Father Guardian, —Cyril,—look at me. I, I am Julian, I am the fugitive!"

Again, the outcry of surprise and wonder filled the hall.

"You spoke the truth yesterday, my brothers," he said; "to-day you are mistaken, if you hold this wretched, ill-starred man for the ungrateful religious who turned his back on Gottesruhe, only to be caught in a labyrinth of woes. I am Julian, not he."

"Who is he, then?" said Leonardus, "that has taken your countenance and figure? Do you know him?"

"I have seen him twice before," replied the other firmly; "and I believe he is Siegfried von den Mohren."

"Impossible!" was the word that burst from the lips of all.

The judge interposed. "Master Conrad, if this

be not unseemly jesting, what proof have you that you are the real Julian? Remember that he is accused of Siegfried's murder."

"I care not, the truth shall be told," said this strange being, now resolute in his vow of penance. "Leonardus, did not your *protégé* wear such a chain as the one I have round my neck?" —opening his doublet,—"and did he not tell you,—you alone of all men,—how the crucifix which you see was given to him? Speak, bear witness."

"It is the truth," said Father Guardian; "I believe Julian told the story to none but me."

"Ask that other if he knows the relic," continued Julian, taking it off and handing it to Leonardus. But the other was silent and inattentive. His mind had slipped on to a new series of imaginations which gave him an absorbed yet stupid look. He did not even notice the chain held before his eyes.

"Write down the story," said the judge, "and let Father Guardian read it. We shall be satisfied if he then declares it to be exact."

Julian did so with feverish rapidity, Leonardus waiting. But when the paper was put into his hand, he let it fall, exclaiming, "You are surely Julian! This is his writing, and the tale is as he told it."

"And that is the Count von den Mohren," repeated Master Conrad; "let Stanislaus judge between us."

The body-servant had just arrived, and came up to the platform.

"Who is this?" he shrieked, on seeing the pretended friar, "oh my master, my master! I should know you anywhere. What has made you so ill?"

"Tell the Court how your master came to be in the neighbourhood of Rabenstein," said Julian to him, as the servant moved hither and thither in a kind of delirious gladness. "What were his plans at that time?"

"He meant to enter the Castle disguised in a monk's habit; to carry off the Lady Gunhilde, and to make her his wife."

"Did he ever threaten to kill the Landgrave of Meissen?"

"He, my master? How can you say so? He never dreamt of such a thing. In a duel he would have fought the Landgrave or any other gentleman; but kill, assassinate! For what do you take him? When I saw him go into the wood, I was aware that he intended to exchange his uniform for a brown Franciscan robe. And I thought it was he who came out again. But now I am certain that it was you."

"Quite right," said Julian; "suffer me to tell the rest of the story."

And he did so, amid breathless silence, the other man listening until he came to the scene of the midnight duel, whereupon Siegfried interrupted him with a wild cry, "Not you!" he screamed, "you did not touch Reinhold. My hand it was that snatched the rapier and finished the work."

Before the words were out of his mouth, the Lady Gunhilde, who had pushed her way into the hall, was on the platform and had thrown her arms about him.

"Is it not Siegfried?" said Julian with a smile to the judge. "And will the Lady Gunhilde accuse me again as his murderer? But I have not told you all. The habit which I discarded, hiding it in a hollow tree, this Von den Mohren, —whose escape from death after such a fall I do not pretend to explain,—must have found and put on, under the delusion that he was at once a friar and Count Siegfried. But why there should be so great a resemblance between us, who shall say?"

"Suffer me to speak,"—the petition which came from the lips of Father Guardian, turned all eyes in his direction. "To-day has brought many things to light which were hidden. This, likewise, must be revealed. When I saw you,

Julian, condemned for the murder of one whom the hand of God has brought alive into our midst, I held my peace concerning the ties which bound you to your supposed victim. Now let me tell my Lord Duke, and these honourable judges, a history for every word of which I will pawn my faith as a priest, however incredible it may sound. Be patient with me, I will not add a detail beyond what is necessary."

The most intense curiosity was visible in every face. Leonardus resumed, after an anxious pause:—

"None here will ever have seen Franz von den Mohren, whom I knew and loved in my youth. Like your Highness, Franz, though a born noble with immense properties in Silesia, was endowed with tastes and accomplishments which led him greatly to delight in the arts of Italy, and, above all, in painting. He haunted the studio of many a celebrated master, lived for years in Rome, and himself painted,—at first only slight sketches, but as he grew more ambitious, large and elaborately-composed pictures, which drew commendation and applause from a wider circle than his personal friends.

"I regret to say that Count Franz, in his middle years, had combined with the study of art a manner of living, too common amid his

surroundings, but still inexcusable. You understand me,—his religious belief was not seriously diminished, but he became a frivolous Voltairean, intent on amusing himself, and not scrupling at the method. He knew our house at Gottesruhe, because I, his old friend, had joined the Franciscans there. And so it happened that I begged him to paint for one of our chapels, the martyrdom of St. Rosalie,"—Julian here became more attentive than ever,—"He accepted the commission, being then in Rome; but when he was sketching his design, an evil thought took hold of him, such as others, and famous men too, have indulged.

"The reason I cannot pretend to assign of his yielding to so perverse a temptation. Yet the story has certainly been told me of his drinking from a strange and curious flask, which an unknown figure had brought to one of their luxurious banquets, and in which a liquor of the deadliest quality was contained.

"However this may have been, the rest of the tale is authentic. He chose, then, to model the features of the Saint on those of a well-known person in the circles he frequented,—no Saint, indeed, but much the reverse, beautiful however, as you may suppose. When he began his picture, and the lady's face was now sketched in, it hap-

pened that Franz, by invitation from some friends like-minded with himself, spent a night in one of the villas above Frascati, and was put to sleep in a room that had formerly been the chapel. There, a strange thing befel him. Saint Rosalie herself appeared to him in vision, and upbraiding him with his intended sacrilege, gave him orders to return instantly to Rome, where he would find proofs of the Divine displeasure, sufficient to convince him that his dream was no hallucination. 'Then,' said the Virgin-Martyr, 'you shall paint for my shrine in the far land, this face and figure which you have beheld. But the punishment of your evil thought, lightened though it may be on your repentance, shall pursue your house until the full penalty has been exacted.'

"Hereupon, the vision left him. Franz, hurrying away as soon as the day dawned, went immediately to Rome, and to his studio. Conceive the stupor with which he beheld the painting already begun a blurred piece of canvas, nothing distinct to be seen in its chaotic colours and ruined outlines! But no one had entered the room while he was away. As he turned to the door again, a messenger stood by him, with the wholly unexpected news that his friend, the lady who was to serve as a model for St. Rosalie, had died of the smallpox.

"That coincidence,—such the world may esteem it,—changed the artist-count from all that he had been. He bade farewell to Italy, came to me at St. Wolfgang's, and there, in solitude, and with prayer and fasting, he wrought the picture as it had been shown him in the vision, and as it now hangs above the shrine of the martyr.

"He was already the husband of a wife whom he had sadly neglected. In the course of a few years, twin sons were born to them; but his wife died, and he was left alone. He did not need my counsels. His own presentiment of what was hanging over his house, impelled him to make provision against the evil day. He resolved on becoming a friar at the convent of the Capuchins in Rome. He gave up his title and estates in favour of Siegfried; and he entrusted the good Dame Mechthilde, his devoted nurse, with the care of this Julian, who was to grow up in the shadow of St. Wolfgang's, and, if I judged favourably of his vocation, there some day to utter his vows."

"And Franz, the artist, is living still?" enquired Duke Ferdinand, when the commotion, which this remarkable narrative excited, was in some degree appeased."

"No, my Lord Duke," said Leonardus, "he

has long been dead. I never saw him after the day he set out for Rome. But the very moment of his decease,—Julian, you gaze on me wonderingly,—I tell you the minute he passed hence is marked in your life! It was the day and hour when you received in his presence, the crucifix you have worn ever since.—My Lord Duke, let the young man tell you how that figure appeared to him;—in what habit he was attired,—not that of a religious, but such as he put on in worldly days,—and who was standing by his side. My correspondence with Rome assures me that Julian's father breathed his last in the convent of the Capuccini, when Julian beheld him at St. Rosalie's shrine."

"And I took my Providence for my tempter!" exclaimed Julian, as Leonardus held out his arms.

Here the legend of St. Anthony's Flask might conclude. Yet such as have read these pages to the end, will perhaps be desirous of knowing whether Siegfried, or Julian, tasted of happiness in the days that remained to them.

Leonardus was sure to take his fugitive back. And he did so. For Julian, there was no home in the wide world but Gottesruhe. And now that he had found a brother in Siegfried, what

could be more natural than that he should beg leave to cherish and tend him in the hope of bringing him round? A light penance for such sins in thought, if not in deed, as he felt were his own!

And Belcampo, distraught but loyal, who during the long scene in the court of justice had in vain endeavoured to distinguish the real from the counterfeit master whom he worshipped,—how could Hans Flitter fail to go with them both, and make the home of his old days at St. Wolfgang's, where, in his aimless travels, he had long ago seen and heard Father Julian preach, and never forgotten the face or the tones which impressed him? Hans was of their company by the best of rights, and he found food and shelter at Gottesruhe, until he needed them no more.

It was many months ere Siegfried overcame the last of his delusions, or Gunhilde could bear to meet Julian. Yet time and grace are for those who have been severely tried, and in the distance there were marriage-bells faintly ringing, the sound of which grew ever more distinct and joyful. At length these two stood before the altar, and Julian blessed them. Rabenstein was sold; and its firwoods, haunted by doleful memories, were never beheld by Siegfried again, from the wild night in which he struck down the Landgrave.

But no children came to the Lady Gunhilde; and the line of the Counts von den Mohren is now extinct. Julian was the last of his race.

He never mounted the pulpit again, nor was known to allude, even when speaking with Father Leonardus, to the strange episode which had made his eloquence dumb, and taught him how frail is human nature when abandoned to its own devices. Yet he gave good counsel, and his direction was sought far and wide. The history which you have read he put on paper, but it was only by the strict command of Leonardus, and in virtue of his monastic obedience.

On a certain night, during his last illness, the brother who prayed by him, saw him open his arms wide, and heard him exclaim: "There is the Heavenly Child, in the garden of lilies, beckoning to me. He is standing by the gate and calls me in! *Festinemus*, let us hasten, hasten into Paradise, my brother Siegfried!"

When his arms fell by his side, all was over.

THE END.

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